Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party
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STRATEGY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN BRITAIN: A REPLY. BERT PEARCE

Editorial Comments

Maurice Cornforth — Some Comments on Louis Althusser's Reply to John Lewis
A. L. Morton — A French View of William Morris
Honor Arundel — Parents and Children
Bessie Leigh — Marxism and the Family

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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Editorial Comments

A WHOLE number of important discussions have been held in recent months with the aim of developing the united action of the Japanese Left and of the four opposition Parties to the Tanaka Government.

On March 6 a two-day discussion opened between Tetsuzo Fuwa, Head of the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Japan and Masashi Ishibashi, General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Japan. Agreement was reached for united action on a whole number of issues, inside and outside Parliament, between the two Parties.

"*Akhata*", the Communist Party daily described the agreement attained as "a marked step towards joint struggle, responding to the expectations of the people who aspired for a change of Government".

The next day, March 7, officials of the two Parties met in two Conferences to discuss problems of mass struggle and questions of local elections. At the discussion on mass struggle it was agreed to develop action on the five issues approved by the Secretaries of the two Parties, whilst the discussion on local elections approved joint action for the Mayoral election at Nagoya and on the calling of periodic meetings to discuss united electoral activity.

On the same day a Conference was held of the Secretaries of the four opposition Parties to the Tanaka Government—Communist Party, Socialist Party, Komei and Democratic Socialist Party. Agreement was reached for joint action in Parliament on six issues including the prevention of increases in railway fares and amendment of the Government's draft Budget.

On March 10, representatives of the Communist and Socialist Parties of Japan met to discuss joint extra-Parliamentary struggle and approved a programme of united action on urgent immediate issues such as the struggle for the implementation of the Vietnam Agreement, joint opposition to the Government's defence programme, a united campaign for the defence of living standards, preparation for joint action on May 15 (first anniversary of the Okinawa Agreement), joint support for local opposition struggle against the basing of the US aircraft carrier "Midway" at Yokosuka.

On the same day the four opposition parties put forward a joint notion in Parliament demanding that the Government withdraw its draft Budget for 1973.

As unity develops in a whole number of fields, the position of the Tanaka Government has been markedly weakened, and a sharp fall in the support which it commands has been noted in a whole succession of local opinion polls.

WITCH HUNT IN WESTERN GERMANY

Western Germany's "Ost-Politik" championed by Chancellor Willi Brandt has assisted possibilities for *détente* and the replacement of cold war policies by those of peace, economic and political co-operation.

But this has not been matched by similar progressive advances on the home front. On the contrary. In our March 1972 "Comments" we drew attention to the decision taken by a Conference of Heads of "Länder" (provincial) Governments to debar employment in the public services to communists and other progressives.

The German Communist Party (DKP) recently issued a statement drawing attention to a whole series of victimisations of people solely on account of their progressive political views and activities. These have taken place on the background of increased police brutality against striking workers, the withdrawal of unemployment benefit for locked out workers in Baden-Wurtenberg, attacks on the rights of trade unionists and shop stewards and especially, the sharpening of the campaign of slander and incitement against the DKP. Amongst recent examples of this was the statement made by the Federal Minister of Home Affairs in the Bundestag, in reply to a question put by a Christian Democrat, that "The DKP pursues

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aims which are hostile to the Constitution."

The following details concern only a few University and other teachers who are the latest victims of the witch hunt. But there are others. The DKP declares that more than 80 people to date have suffered victimisation for their views.

Horst Holzer: Scientific Adviser and Professor of Sociology at Munich University, applied for the Chair of Aesthetic Communication at Bremen University. Despite a written recommendation from the Rector of the University, his appointment was rejected by the Senate of the Bremen Provisional Government because of his membership of the DKP.

Ilse Jakob: Daughter of an anti-fascist resistance fighter, Franz Jakob, who was done to death by the Nazis, has been dismissed and debarred for life from employment in the civil service. Investigation of her activities had shown that she was active in the Union of Victims of Nazi Persecution.

Ulrich Kuder: Religious Instruction teacher, member of the Social Democratic Party, was dismissed from his post in a Munich school. His progressive anti-militaristic teaching was made the grounds for his dismissal.

Ulrich Topp: Teacher in Heidelberg. Social Democrat and holder of an official position in his union. Dismissed from his post because he is alleged to have introduced trade union ideas into his lessons (e.g. in discussions on the right to strike, etc.).

The practice of organising "hearings", reminiscent of the McCarthy days in the USA, has now been introduced before teachers are dismissed. At these, those suspected of progressive views are subjected to real "grillings" about their political views. Although there is a teacher shortage in Western Germany, progressive teachers are being hounded out of the profession, but members of the Neo-Nazi NPD are being given jobs in Grammar schools and in other branches of the public service.

Western Germany has a Social Democratic Chancellor and a Government, the main party in which is the Social Democratic Party. Yet these attacks on democratic rights, all in gross violation of the Basic Constitutional Law, which guarantees immunity from penalisation on grounds of race, religion or political views, continue.

Broadly based campaigns in support of those dismissed are being undertaken in the localities involved. But we too have a duty to help by sending protests to the German Embassy, 23, Belgrave Square, London, SW1.

TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

The signing of the Peace Treaty in Vietnam has opened up new possibilities for further victories in the struggle to establish lasting peace.

It is therefore very much to the point that *Editions Sociales* should have produced a new paperback "Vers le Désarmement" (Towards Disarmament) by Roger Mayer, a leading member of the French Peace Movement and for years a close associate of Joliot-Curie during the time he was President of the World Peace Council.

The struggle for disarmament is a long and difficult one. It requires the mobilisation of public opinion on an unprecedented scale. As Roger Mayer points out so far there have been no measures of *actual* disarmament, no destruction of weapons considered by the General Staffs as vital for their military policies. Yet a number of partial measures of limitation have been achieved—for example, the Test Ban Treaty (which prohibited tests in the atmosphere and in the sea), or the Non-Proliferation Treaty (important for future nuclear disarmament in the sense that it limits the number of nuclear powers) or the SALT Agreement (important to the extent that it places restrictions on the development of more sophisticated anti-missiles capable of giving a further twist to the already insane and escalating arms race).

Doubtless the strategists of imperialism see these agreements in terms of "arms control", an approach which relies on the grisly hypothesis of the maintenance of peace through a "balance of terror". To them, SALT has prevented the anti-missile from upsetting the balance. Looked at in another way though, SALT can be the starting point for actual balanced reductions in the world's missile armouries. The key is public pressure. That is what decides whether these partial agreements are steps towards disarmament, or simply momentary measures of controlling the cold war warriors' arms equilibrium.

What tremendous savings could come from disarmament! What a new world we could build! World expenditure amounted in 1970 to 200,000,000,000 dollars. 58 per cent of that was due to NATO. 85 per cent of it was accounted for by seven countries: the USA, Canada, Britain, Federal Germany, France, the USSR and China. The USA alone accounted for 44 per cent of the total.

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As Roger Mayer says:

> "In 1968, this expenditure represented the equivalent of *all* the world's production in 1900. Growth at present rates would lead, by the year 2000, to a situation where the labour and goods expended on armaments would be equivalent to all the resources used each year for all purposes in the entire world today."

We cannot, we must not, allow that to happen.

THE CRISIS OF LONDON

"The Recurrent Crisis of London", an Anti-Report on the Property Developers, published by Counter Information Services provides a revealing portrait of the economics of the property section of capitalism.[1] During the past two decades great chunks of London have been torn down; houses, shops and small workshops have fallen prey to the bulldozer, and thousands have lost their home and livelihood.

The huge, often ugly towers erected have made the property developers millionaires, and some multi-millionaires, overnight. What is most significant and alarming is that the developers could not have made their fortunes without the co-operation of the public authorities. The London County Council (the predecessor of the Greater London Council) and London Borough Councils, starved of finance by government policies and with limited powers, were forced, willingly or otherwise, to do deals giving property developers planning permissions which were worth even more than the keys of the Royal Mint.

The irony of the situation is that the resulting inflation in land prices and rents then forced the local councils to pay dearly for sites required to provide the public amenities needed to service the concrete and glass monstrosities disfiguring London. It is the familiar story of private enterprise getting the juicy steak while the public authorities, in this case the ratepayers, have to foot the bill and are left with the bone.

The developers and their Tory pals will justify all this in the name of free enterprise and a free market. But there is no such thing as a free market in property and housing. The limited supply of land combined with planning regulations gives landlords and landowners a monopoly position. This they have exploited at great cost to millions of manual and professional workers and small businessmen. It is not too late to prevent this process continuing and accelerating. But tinkering about with the existing set up will be little better than useless. The very size of the fortunes made by the developers demands measures which challenge the system which facilitates their operations. Such measures would need to include the nationalisation of urban land, except that of owner occupiers, with compensation at low rates; housing treated as a social service with free sites and finance at low rates of interest; and a wealth tax which would begin to take from the property men with the Midas touch at least some part of their huge fortunes.

[1] *Recurrent Crisis of London* published by Counter-Information Services, 52 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W1. 60p.

THE PEOPLE'S THEATRE

We would like to bring to the attention of our readers the journal *Theatre Quarterly*.[2] Recent issues have carried a number of articles of great interest to Marxists, in particular the number of October/December 1971 on "People's Theatre" in which Clive Barker wrote on "The Chartists and the Theatre" as part of a series of articles by different writers on the "Working-class Theatre in 19th Century Britain". Other subjects that were discussed in this issue included "China; the Theatre in Revolution 1907-1971". Possibly the most interesting of all was "The Early Years at Unity" by Malcolm Page of the Simon Frazer University which includes an interview with Bram Bootman, the then-secretary of the Society.

Of particular interest in the coming Spring 1973 issue will be an article by Ewen McColl on "The Grass Roots of Theatre Workshop", an analysis of the beginnings of a Company whose work only received recognition by bourgeois critics in the 50's, but whose roots lay in the agitational demands of the industrial struggle in the North of England (particularly Lancashire) twenty years earlier. This issue will also contain studies of the Royal Shakespeare Company's important Gorky productions of the last two years and a historical account by Arnold Goldman of the "Life and Death of the Living Newspaper Unit".

The journal is helping to show that amongst the many diverse streams in the British theatre there is a fairly continuous popular, often avowedly political tradition.

[2] Published four times yearly at 80p from 39 Goodge Street, London, W.1.

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Reply to Discussion :—

The Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

Bert Pearce

Thirty-nine contributions were sent into this discussion. Twenty-one were printed, and all those, which solely for reasons of space, were not able to get in, have been carefully read, by myself and other members of the *Marxism Today* editorial board. The discussion as a whole has certainly helped not only to debate some of the arguments against the basic approach of our programme, but also to see that mere acceptance of it is a long way from enough. Continuous development of our discussion around it will deepen our grasp and application of its ideas. And no doubt it will help to improve the presentation of the programme itself.

Many comrades urged this and made useful suggestions, a number calling for fuller analysis of current developments, national and international we would welcome this. Some efforts have been made, in party discussions and in *Marxism Today* and *Comment*. Gerry Cohen's Executive Report on the "Class Structure of Britain" (*Comment* January 30, February 6, 1971) dealt with changes in the working class, and with problems of the broad alliance, which many raised in this discussion. The contributions of Ron Bellamy and Sam Aaronovitch to the recent Economic Committee discussion (reprinted in *Marxism Today*—January and March 1973) probed into changes in British capitalism and consequences for the class struggle. *Marxism Today* follows a policy of printing major statements by leading comrades of brother parties whose experience and analysis will help us (as recently from France, Spain, Guinea, Chile and others). The Resolutions at our Congresses, Gollan's pamphlet "The Socialist Way Ahead", his booklet "The Case for Socialism in the Sixties", Woddis' "New Theories of Revolution" and "Time to Change Course" have all carried on the basic arguments.

To attempt here to answer every point raised in 39 contributions would be not very useful even if possible. But most of the controversial views seem to group into four main questions, and it is on these I would like to make brief comments.

1. IS IT A SCIENTIFIC, CLASS PROGRAMME?

To some comrades it appears as a rationalised electoral shopping list, having adopted which we are now trying to make our ideology fit it. Or it is seen as an exaggeration of the possibility of a peaceful transition into a sort of rigid textbook for a future revolutionary situation which we cannot yet foresee in such detail.

I think these views are fundamentally wrong in two ways. They completely distort the motivation and the process of thinking and discussion which produced our programme. In fact they ignore also the process of analysis of new roads of approach to and carrying out of socialist revolution, which has been going on in the whole international movement, not only since the second world war, but even before it.

Secondly they seem to miss entirely the basic purpose of a Marxist programme, which is to lead us to a revolutionary situation, *from where we are now*. It is not a blue print of some ideal revolution we would like. It is a strategy for forward struggle.

Our programme accordingly was not designed as a "peaceful road" or a "parliamentary road" with theory and practice then to be modelled to substantiate it. It was born out of the actual experience and needs of our post-war class struggles. The need is to provide a strategic view ahead which would enable the working-class to develop out of its own mass struggles a unity of all democratic and socialist forces to isolate, to challenge and to defeat monopoly capitalism. All the great mass struggles of our time do in fact lead to a confrontation with the policies and powers of government, and of the system of state-monopoly capitalism. We can see in the present wave of strikes how this makes it more difficult even to gain sectional economic successes. And even where a success is gained it becomes clear that further frustration lies ahead unless all these struggles can be bound together by a socialist strategy and the leadership of a united working class.

In the discussion this was brought out by the

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conflicting arguments about present day strikes. Some comrades said they were mainly or purely "economic". Others pointed to their political significance and even criticised left trade union leaders for refusing to call them "political strikes."

Here is the nub of our problem, facing us relentlessly every day, and not be answered by the simple adoption by us of one label or the other. Only the grasp of the ideas of the *British Road*, and the persistent fight for them in the thick of the mass movement is going to create the forces to break through to a new stage.

The crisis of capitalism, the policies of the Government, intensify the political, class significance of every strike. We understand this. Many militant workers see it. But how many? And how many see the political conclusions from it—the programme which can take millions of workers, united on wage claims, forward to unity for a change of government and change of power?

In a Socialist Direction

It is to create the conditions for this development of the mass struggle in a socialist direction that our programme was produced. The methods of struggle, and the approach to the problem of state-power and existing institutions, such as Parliament, arise, not from any pre-determined slogan of a "Parliamentary Road", but from the estimation of the class forces in our society, and the actual situations in which their struggle is developing now and will develop in the foreseeable future.

As Dave Priscott said (January 1972) "It is a road of mass struggle in the course of which Parliament will be both used and transformed."

The extent to which we spell out possible forms of transition (*BRS*, page 50 . . . "We believe that this is a perspective that can be achieved . . .") is in no way exaggerated as "an only way" or a set of tactics to be followed by the book "when the day comes!" It is done so as to spell out concretely the problem of class political power in Britain, to show those involved in the various mass movements what is the essence of a socialist solution, to provide a way forward which will be understandable and acceptable to working people fighting for their economic and democratic demands.

Programmes can be adapted to meet changing circumstances. But one essential of a revolutionary situation is the forces of the people brought to the point where they *want* fundamental change, and have *confidence* in a working class leadership pointing the way to achieve that change. To lift the sights of the present movement to the need for socialist change (and to disperse the fog of right wing confusion and slanders about socialism) is a basic purpose of our programme.

2. THE BROAD ANTI-MONOPOLY ALLIANCE: IS IT A CLASS CONCEPT?

Bill Warren (August 1972) most sharply questions the theoretical foundation of the anti-monopoly alliance, saying that "Comrade Pearce in a moment of weakness, admits that no class analysis underlies the strategy of the broad popular alliance."

Really, I "admitted" nothing of the kind. What I said was that the list (on page 28 of the *British Road*) was not a list of separate class forces, but was intended to show the various (and overlapping) sections of the people which all find themselves in conflict with monopoly capitalism and can be drawn into united struggle around the "core of the alliance, the working class and its organisations, the main class force in the struggle to change society."

The purpose and reality of such a list arises precisely from our analysis of our society as overwhelmingly divided, in the first place, between the "treacherous class" of super-monopolists, increasingly based on international investment, and the working-class, numerically the great majority of the population and decisive because of its role in social production.

The increasing concentration of power and wealth even within the capitalist class itself, accentuates the clash between the interests of the super-monopoly group and every other section of society. Ron Bellamy (*Trends in British Capitalism in the Seventies*, *Marxism Today* January 1973) shows how the increased concentration of capital and our stage of state-monopoly-capitalism, is continuing the polarisation of society (nearly one in four grocers' shops vanished in the ten years 1961-71; the longer term trend to separate professional workers, previously self-employed, into a minority of employers and a majority of salaried employees). To quote him:

> "to the extent that the traditional mass base of monopoly capitalism's support—the small and middle capitalists, the self-employed, many professional workers—become disaffected enough to become neutral, to that extent it becomes impossible for the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital to create what above all it wants and needs to create, that is conditions which hamper the development of working class unity in action, and the establishment of working class leadership over wider forces of the people."

At the same time numbers of scientific, technical and other professional workers are becoming in fact paid workers; while very large sections (such as teachers, nurses, clerical workers, civil servants) objectively wage-earning workers all along, are now becoming consciously identified with their position in the working class movement.

Gerry Cohen, in his Executive Committee Report on *Class Structure in Britain* (*Comment*, January 30

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and February 6, 1971) analysed these wider forces, showing that between the monopoly capitalists and the working class there were not only those sections defineable as smaller capitalist, petty bourgeois (small shopkeepers, farmers, small business) but also the very rapidly changing and diverse elements of the middle strata.

Middle Strata

These include a great variety of the higher professional, intellectual, scientific, and managerial occupations, whose connections and interests have tended often to lie more with the exploiting class than with the exploited. Yet even among these higher paid and privileged sections increasing cross currents of interest (national rights, environment, world peace and co-operation, the usage of science, and intellectual freedom etc.) are tending to weaken their commitment to the present system. The process is most obvious amongst the younger generation and the students.

In class terms, the working class (the overwhelming majority) can obviously work to ally with itself the bulk of middle strata people, and small business men squeezed by the monopolies. It is sensible to see the possibility of such elements continuing to support a powerful alliance with the working class movement to the point of the taking over of the key monopolies, as envisaged in the *British Road*. Indeed one can feel the germs of such a common interest in the commitment of shopkeepers and others in such towns as Ebbw Vale, or Shotton, to the mass fight against steelworks closures because the workers wages are literally life and death for them too. It was shown most clearly in the mass support for the UCS struggle. If similar struggles, on even wider issues demand their solution in public ownership of big industry, the small business man may well find his security with the working class, rather than with the men of Brussels!

People versus Monopolies

But such a class definition is only a very partial analysis of our actual potential forces against monopoly capitalism. Both in the middle strata and in the working class itself the problem of raising the anti-capitalist class consciousness of the people is a very complex one. We need to grasp all the varied ways in which monopoly today conflicts with the interests of people. Many of these ways bring people together in groupings which are not directly class groups. A feature of our time is the growth of grass roots movements to assert "democratic rights" against the monopolies (often not seen as such, or identified with "central government"). The fight against unemployment or rail closures in Wales or Scotland links with national interests of those countries; the student movement and the campaign for education, whether comprehensive or nursery, links many sections; the aspects of Women's Liberation; the exploitation of immigrant population; protection of the environment; movements for peace, for national liberation; against the Common Market; Tenants and Residents movements—these are only some of the issues which are giving rise to more or less organised forces, some more permanent than others, all involving both working class people and others, which *can* be led to recognise and to act against the root of all their problems, their common enemy, the monopoly domination of society.

Involvement in these wider movements is important for raising the level of class consciousness within the working class itself, as well as for establishing the leadership of the working class for its programme and aims, within the whole broad movement.

This is surely the essence of a revolutionary class strategy for Britain today. Some comrades in the discussion felt that the perspective of the *British Road* and the broad alliance was ignoring the vicious reactionary turns which we should expect from monopoly capitalism in its growing crisis. But on the contrary, it is just these desperate, anti-democratic forms to which capitalism is already turning (Industrial Relations Act; Housing Finance Act; attacks on picketing; police brutality; heavy sentences; sell out to the Common Market; the Phase 2 Incomes Policy) which are the basis for undermining its mass support. The more the monopolies attack even those national and democratic rights which they have boasted about in the past, the more our defence of democracy becomes a practical, offensive programme, helping to rally the widest sections to assert themselves against monopoly power.

It is precisely the objective of building a broad alliance around the working class, to show that all these basic economic, social and democratic rights can in the end only be defended by going forward to break monopoly power and replace it with socialism.

3. LEFT UNITY—ILLUSION OR REALITY?

If the class structure of Britain emphasises both the overwhelming central role of the working class, and its complex, developing character, then the question of how to lead towards working class unity on a socialist basis, is obviously the key one for us.

And this is where a number of the arguments put forward to show that the *British Road* is "not revolutionary—is simply reformist" are centred. They say that even such industrial struggles and militancy as may have taken place are in no way a result of or a justification of the strategy of the

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British Road. Any move to the left in Trade Union policies and elections is mostly the result of an economic militancy naturally resulting from working class reaction against capitalism's inflation and other social pressures. Our leadership in such struggles has been on purely economic grounds without any significant political content. And it is seriously questioned whether there is any real move to the left in the Labour Party at all, and whether the so-called left allies are really only a second line of "left-reformists" whose limitations we are overlooking.

The conclusion from such thinking must be that we need a new strategy and tactics, which would be "really revolutionary" and would "really expose" bourgeois democracy and reformism. No-one specifies this alternative strategy, and the more one attempts to consider it, the more one is driven to the conclusion that it is an illusion, the search for which can only divert us from the actual problems of building up the revolutionary movement which the *British Road* sets out before us.

I think we would all benefit from rereading the Reports of our own Party Congresses beginning from 1961, when our Resolution declared:

> "Since the foundation of the Communist Party the central problem of the Labour Movement has been the establishment of the correct relationship and alliance between the political class party of the working class, the Communist Party, and the main body of the mass organisations of the working class, still held in the grip of reformist leadership which pursued capitalist leadership through the Labour Party".

Persistently since then we have charted the course for the movement to tackle this problem, analysing each stage, setting the realiseable aims for the next stage and working steadily to achieve them.

Combating Reformism

The exposure and defeat of right wing reformist illusions is not simply a matter of words. It is a matter of leading effective mass struggles in such a way that these political lessons become part of the consciousness of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. Then an alternative political road to the left becomes possible in real life and not just in the pages of our pamphlets.

Anyone engaged in recent industrial struggles understands only too well the depth of the problem of building out of them a new socialist class consciousness. The years of post-war capitalism, very different in atmosphere from the thirties on such basic issues as wages, living standards and consumer goods, unemployment, plus the impact of the two Labour Governments and their form of nationalisation, plus the complicated developments in the socialist world internationally, all created the conditions in which even the present level of struggle for wages and jobs, was not easy to open up.

While it is true that these struggles have taken place under the impact of the deepening crisis of British and world capitalism, it is no less true that it required an immense effort by our Party through its daily activity and explanations, in which the role of the *Morning Star* has been indispensible, to initiate and promote each action. It has required prolonged and determined work by our Party on the basis of our Programme, constant political argument and discussion in order to stimulate the present stage of mass actions against closures, against the Government's incomes policy, against anti-working class laws, and so on.

Much as has been done, still more experience of struggle and still more political explanation is required if the political consciousness of the working class is to advance beyond the stage of class struggles within the existing system, however militant such struggles may be. Our task is to bring to the working class an understanding that what is required is not a reform of the existing system, but the ending of capitalism and the introduction of socialism.

We are well aware of the limitations of the present level of militant struggle, hence the series of Sessions for Trade Unionists taken by Gollan and Ramelson on "Militancy and Working Class Power"; and the publication now of the *Time to Change Course* book by Woddis. Our last Party Congress concentrated attention on the vital need to carry the Left unity achieved to some extent in the Unions and the TUC, now into the Labour Party, to break down the bans, and achieve a decisive change of leadership and policy there.

No one underestimates the scope of such a projected development. For 70 years the right wing have reigned supreme in the Labour Party, and enabled it to be contained within its role as a second string government for capitalism.

That the right wing domination in the TUC is now for the first time seriously shaken is not due simply to spontaneous economic militancy. It is due to the existence of a socialist force able to understand the significance of the economic battles, and to bring into them the political ideas which direct them to permanent advances within the movement.

It is because these struggles bear out the analysis made in the *British Road*, that we are now in a position to put forward a realistic next stage with the prospect that there are forces capable of carrying it through and so transforming the Labour Party and the whole political scene in Britain.

Who are the "Left"?

Central to the whole process is our recognition as Communists, that we are not the only force for

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socialism, that we cannot do it alone, and that to the extent we try to do it alone, we only alienate potential allies. Unity of the Left means for us our readiness as Communists to work as honest comrades with all those who will work with us in the present stage of the struggle against capitalism. Only out of this comradely unity in action today can tomorrow's unity be developed.

This is why those who see the Left as simply certain leaders or MP's are missing the whole point. The left is the whole growing movement of people against monopoly. Of course in its widest sense this is a vast up and down process—but more up than down. Thousands take up a militant struggle on an issue and then fall back. But within this total tide of struggle, the growing core of people with a conscious political attitude involves shop stewards, tenants leaders, community activists, local councillors, Labour people, communists, black militants, Welsh and Scottish nationalists, anti-apartheid and peace campaigners, the movement for the rights of women and young people. From these comes the potential of a powerful political left movement, united around the organised militancy of the working class.

The significance of the Left trade union leader or Labour MP, is the extent to which they represent this growing mass movement, identify with it and, in their positions, help it to develop. At all levels, from the factory floor or council estate to the General Council of the TUC or Parliament, our understanding of the meaning of Left-Communist unity will play a vital part in bringing this movement to fruition.

We are surrounded by opportunities and challenges. The UCS struggle gave birth to a whole series of such joint movements, with industrial action committees linked with entire communities. The tenants and councils' resistance to the Housing Finance Act; the Action Committees, and extended role of Trades Councils in the fight against the Incomes policies—all these pose real problems to us, as to how they can generate a power and direct it to the transformation of the labour movement into an instrument for socialism.

The future of the Communist Party is not a separate thing. It is bound up with our successful leadership on these problems of the whole movement.

4. DEMOCRACY—CAPITALIST TRICK OR WORKERS' WEAPON?

How do we help the people engaged in these mass movements, to grasp the nature of class political power in Britain today? How can we make real to them what has to be done to create a state apparatus which will act for the people, for socialism, and not for capitalism? The *British Road* at the outset (pages 18-19) challenges the ideas of the Right reformists about the "neutral state"—ideas which it says confuse and disarm people.

It has been suggested that the post-war development of capitalism, with greater state-intervention in the economy, could be seen as implying a more neutral state, and a less militant class struggle, and that this is the reason for more emphasis on a "parliamentary transition" to socialism.

But such notions are not only in contradiction to what is actually happening, they are the direct opposite of the concepts on which the *British Road* is based. Throughout our programme runs the emphasis on intensifying mass, class struggles.

It is precisely so as to indicate a line of advance beyond economic militancy that the *British Road* spells out in detail the functions of the state machine, and therefore says that we shall have to use the power of mass struggles to use and extend all our democratic rights, to use and transform parliament into "an instrument of the people's will", to replace the capitalist state by a socialist state.

Such a road ahead is surely the clearest along which the mass movement can advance to challenge the actual dictatorship of monopoly capitalism, exposing the fraud of its alleged "democracy" and isolating it against the unity of all who fight for *real* political and economic democracy.

Some critics fear that such a fight to use and extend our present democratic and parliamentary rights means subordinating the workers to a purely defensive battle, an exaggerated respect for bourgeois democracy which will hamstring the struggle. They dismiss our call to defend democracy from the "alleged" encroachments of the monopolies, because they ask; why should the capitalists for some mysterious reason attack their own state, which is serving them so well in kidding the people? In fact, when the *British Road* refers to Parliament as "the supreme organ of representative power", is it not helping the bourgeois propaganda which tries to prevent workers striking against the laws of this sovereign parliament?

Attack on Democracy

This curiously static approach is blind to the real-life dialectics of democracy and class power. Political power involves on the one hand the apparatus of the capitalist state, built up over the centuries, departments of direct and violent suppression, the army, the police, the law courts; a vast web of economic and financial control; it also involves a system of Parliamentary and local government representation in which election by universal vote is curbed by various legal restrictions but above all by the undemocratic electoral system and the two party domination of the mass media. There is *also* the extensive network of social and

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educational services, again involving popular representation and ruling class control.

What the monopoly capitalists now seek to attack and cut back, and for no mysterious reason, are the democratic rights, previously won by the working people in mass struggle, but now becoming too expensive, or too dangerous as the working class seeks to use them in more powerful ways. The mass fight to defend all these rights is not a defensive submission to bourgeois outlooks. It is the most effective way of putting them to the test and proving that democracy for the people will be attacked and destroyed unless we take away from the monopoly capitalist ruling class the actual state power they now hold.

It is not "their state" which the capitalists are now turning to attack. It is those democratic footholds in it which the working class and the people might now start to use in a way that challenges the centres of power such as insisting on the right to work as was done at the UCS and 50 odd other factories.

Transformation of Parliament

But the peculiarity of Parliament is that it is a body actually elected by universal vote (whatever the inequalities of the electoral system) and that it is constitutionally asserted to be the sovereign body —the supreme organ of representative power. Even under the present electoral set up it has been possible for Labour majorities to be elected. Now that the mass pressure, and block votes in the Labour Movement are moving to the Left is it not the direct, and rational offensive strategy for the movement to set its sights on filling Parliament with a majority of socialist and communist representatives, put there by a powerful mass movement, determined that it shall legislate for them and not for the monopolies?

That this means changing Parliament as well as the State institutions we know and we say. Do we not therefore have to "smash the state machine"? Of course, we have to eliminate capitalist representatives from all their positions in the State so that their ability to use the State for their own class interests and to repress the people is ended. We have to ensure that the political, economic and social apparatus of the State is loyal to socialism and not sabotaging its construction. In addition to changes of personnel, recruitment and training, it will be necessary to carry through a considerable restructuring of the entire State apparatus so its whole purpose and functioning is directed to socialist construction, not to maintaining capitalism. These changes, building up a new socialist state, involve a process in which different methods and speeds will be necessary for different departments of the State.

The sight of striking civil servants, post office workers, printing workers and TV technicians, has already reminded us that there is a vast involvement of ordinary people in the modern state machinery, and that they, and even the ordinary soldier, are not immune from the growth of the kind of mass movement for change which we are working for.

What will be needed to effect the firm, swift and direct dismantling of the secret police, the decisive grades of the armed forces and police, and to ensure democratic control of the radio and TV might be of a different order from the measures to ensure that workers in banks, nationalised industries, the civil service and so on had power to see that they were serving the socialist government and not sabotaging it.

Parliament itself would develop a greater operative function in the carrying through of its legislation, not merely debating and voting on it. It would need to assert its own apparatus of control, in place of the machinery of royal prerogative, House of Lords, privy council, cabinet and integrated top-civil service and finance-industrial meetings which really control Parliament today.

A socialist Parliament would rely in this process, on the forces of the people which had brought it to power, the trade unions, the shop-stewards, the

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vastly expanded functions of trades councils, the local councils, and numerous united bodies which such a great mass struggle would undoubtedly create.

Threats of Violence

Is this just an airy picture? Would not the ruling class break up our dream world, even before we get there, with ruthless violence? Of course they will, if they can. We are not dreamers. We are leading struggles in which already we face increased violence and threats of violence by the Carrs and Maudlings who tell us openly that they can no longer rely on kidding the majority along, but they will have to impose their minority rule by force of law, backed by police truncheons.

This is not news to us. We have said quite clearly in *The British Road to Socialism* that "the working class will need to be ready to use its organised strength to prevent or defeat attempts at violence against it. . . . This strength will determine whether the verdict is accepted, or whether, in defence of their interests, the capitalists resist by force." (pages 49-50)

Some comrades have argued that this language is not clear enough (for example, that the term used by the French Communist Party—"resort to popular violence"—is better). Language can be improved, but there can be no question that our Party's position is clearly put.

Amplifying our position in *Time to Change Course* Jack Woddis explains that if the capitalists turn to the illegal use of force "then the people will have to be prepared to use its own force, its organised strength, to crush such illegal and anti-democratic activity. In such circumstances, it will be seen that it was not the working class and its allies that flouted democracy and resorted to illegal violence, but big business and its supporters; and the people will *justifiably use whatever measures are necessary to end the violent activity undertaken by the capitalists.*" (page 57—emphasis added).

We are for the people using their rights to make Parliamentary democracy work for them, removing from the State any personnel who would frustrate or sabotage such a process, staffing it with people who would be loyal and responsive to the people, transforming it into a State which will follow the policy and carry out activity in accordance with the socialist aims of the Government.

Should the ruling class seek to prevent this democratic process by force, then it would be met by working class force.

The key questions are really, where is the power which will enable the Socialist Government to tackle the capitalist state? And what will the people be prepared to fight for?

Today we cannot be ignorant of the menace of capitalist violence. Just across the water in Northern Ireland we see how cold-bloodedly they will carry out repression, at the cost of the lives of their "own troops" as well as those of their enemies. That they would do the same here is unquestioned. But they are able to do it so far in Ireland, because of the divisions they have so cunningly planted and played upon amongst the Irish people themselves, and because of the continued ignorance of the issues, and tolerance of their brutality by the British working class movement.

It is so that our people shall be united on the broadest basis of common interest against the monopolies, knowing they are only claiming their own democratic and social rights and therefore prepared to fight for them if need be, that we put our socialist programme forward.

To those comrades who asked why the *British Road* had not produced quicker results, more communist votes, or an end to the crisis in the labour movement, I would only say that we are not claiming that we have a formula for instant revolution. We are seeking to understand and therefore play a more meaningful part in what we know to be a difficult and complex struggle.

A New Direction

The crisis in the labour movement expresses the basic struggle between left and right. Our work is to accentuate that struggle until it ends with the decisive triumph of the left, and that will mean that the British working class has at last set its foot firmly on the road to class power and socialism.

What the experience of the recent years does show is that our strategy is based on real forces. They are beginning to develop to a stage where a new direction of labour movement politics is possible.

But it is a possibility which cannot become reality without the political ideas of our programme becoming understood by the decisive sections of the mass movement, and without the Communist Party being built into a more effective public political force in its own right, able to take the political and electoral initiatives the situation will demand.

This is why the far-reaching campaign of debate and explanation around the book *Time to Change Course* is of such importance to the outcome of events.

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Some Comments on Louis Althusser's Reply to John Lewis

Maurice Cornforth

Louis Althusser, having been denounced by John Lewis as a dogmatist, has replied that Lewis is a bourgeois idealist. It would seem, however, more useful to set aside such invidious categorisations in order to examine some of the propositions Althusser has put forward in his Reply and Self-criticism.

1. DIALECTICS

But first a few general comments on Althusser's standpoint. It seems to me that his "self-criticism" could be made more searching by some considerations about Dialectics. Althusser has often advised Marxists to read Marx, and especially *Capital*. But when it comes to dialectics, one should read Engels too.

Marx often used the word "dialectics", and wrote of "contradictions" and on occasion (as Althusser rather ruefully acknowledges) of "the negation of the negation". But Marx's writings are more an exemplar of the dialectical method than an exposition of its general principles. Everything he wrote demonstrated the scientific power of dialectical thinking, but he did not break off to explain to us—"this is how it's done". Engels, however, did try to provide some general advice or recipes. I am not thinking so much of what he wrote about so-called "laws" of dialectics as of his observations in *Anti-Dühring* and in *Feuerbach* about the difference between a dialectical and what he called a "metaphysical" approach.

Once one has grasped the point of dialectics, Engels wrote in Chapter 4 of *Feuerbach*, "one no longer permits oneself to be imposed on by the *antitheses* (my italics) insuperable for the old metaphysics. . . . One knows that these antitheses have only a relative validity."

But Althusser specialises in antitheses. And this, I think, remains his besetting weakness. It misleads him and causes him to mislead others.

Posing Antitheses

One of his chief antitheses concerns "science" and "ideology". He simply opposes the one to the other without relating them. But in *Dialectics of Nature* Engels informed us that "dialectics" is "the science of interconnections". One doesn't just oppose, one connects.

Dialectics is by some sometimes disconnected from logic. But yet dialectics is the logic of relations. To try to grasp the moving inter-relationships—that is what dialectics is all about. And when certain "general laws" of dialectics are formulated, that is only to describe in very general terms certain universal features of inter-relationship.

This, incidentally, is why all those who, like J-P. Sartre, repudiate "dialectics of nature" and say that dialectics applies only to man and society are quite wrong.

And it is also why Althusser is wrong when he sets up such antitheses as "science" and "ideology", where science is not ideology and ideology is not science; or, in another context, disconnects Marx the humanist from Marx the materialist and scientist.

I myself queried Althusser's antithetical way of thinking in a reference to his *Pour Marx* in my book *The Open Philosophy*, and perhaps may be allowed to repeat now what I there wrote. "Althusser has presented us with a definition of 'ideology' which distinguishes it sharply, as class-determined opinion, from science. . . . Here is a case of a Marxist engaging in that very habit of setting up abstract antitheses against which the Marxist dialectic is directed. . . . It is a great mistake to set up science in abstract antithesis to ideology. Under definite circumstances ideology can only be developed to satisfy its practical social function by the adoption of the methods of science."

In the following comments I shall try to show some of the ways in which Althusser's undialectical posing of antitheses has obtruded in his Reply to Lewis.

2. CLASS STRUGGLE AND PHILOSOPHY

Let us take points in the order Althusser presents them. The first is about class struggle and philosophy.

"The working class *needs philosophy* in the class struggle. They need not only the Marxist *science* of history . . . but also Marxist philosophy. . . ."

These statements by Althusser are true enough. Yet only confusion is started up after his use in their formulation of the stereotyped antithetical construction "not only . . . but also . . .". For he immediately starts to contrast and oppose "philosophy" and "science".

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Philosophy, he insists, is *not* science. No, "in the last instance" it is, on the contrary, "class struggle in the field of theory".

Well of course philosophy is class struggle in the field of theory. And it always has been, whether philosophers have been aware of the fact or not. But that does not mean that philosophy is not science, and that there cannot be scientific as distinct from pre-scientific or unscientific philosophy. Marxist *philosophy* is a science, scientific philosophy. And Marxist *science*, the science about men and society, is also class struggle in the field of theory.

Just consider! Is not "the Marxist science of history" a waging of class struggle in the ideological field of comprehending history? *Capital* is a thoroughly and rigorously scientific work. But doesn't it make a contribution to the working-class struggle? Wasn't Marx himself waging the class struggle for the working class, and in a way a good deal more effective than that adopted by many of his contemporaries, as he sat in the British Museum Reading Room writing *Capital*? Of course he was!

And then consider Marxist philosophy. Isn't it scientific? Is it "in the last instance" class struggle in theory and *not* science? Dialectical materialism is philosophical science in a sense similar to that in which historical materialism is historical science, whereas the idealist philosophies lacked this scientific character just as idealist theories about history are unscientific.

Philosophy and Science

One should consider, too, the ways in which the class struggle is waged in the fields of theory.

When science and philosophy are set in abstract antithesis instead of being related, or when science and ideology are abstractly contrasted, then it would seem that in science one sets out regardless of class considerations to arrive at objective truth, whereas in philosophy one sets out regardless of objective truth to serve a class by waging class struggle. In "the last instance", as Althusser (desiring "not to be misunderstood" and "to be precise") puts it, scientific theories are determined by considerations of objective truth, whereas philosophical ones are determined by considerations of class struggle.

But Marxist philosophy is not concerned "in the last instance" only to wage the ideological warfare of the working class and not with objective truth, any more than Marxist science of society is concerned "in the last instance" only with objective truth and not with waging the ideological warfare of the working class.

The point is, that to wage its class struggle the working class needs science. Hence no more than Marxist science is unconcerned with the ideological class struggle against bourgeois theories masquerading as science, is Marxist philosophy unconcerned with adopting scientific method in philosophy. No, it is very much concerned with it, precisely for the purpose of waging ideological class struggle against the fallacies and confusions of bourgeois philosophies.[1]

But for Althusser, philosophy is definitely *not* a science. He repeats this later in his Reply. "Philosophy is not a science. Philosophy has no object, in the sense in which a science has an object."

This is to make nonsense of Marxist philosophy by making it out to be an ideological product undirected by any kind of scientific method. So not surprisingly, Althusser puts himself in direct opposition, not to bourgeois idealists (many of whom would agree with him), but to Marx's collaborator Engels.

According to Engels, philosophy, as distinguished from the natural and social (or "empirical") sciences, is "the science of thought and its laws" (*Anti-Dühring*, Chapter 1). And dialectics, considered as a part of philosophical theory, is "the science of interconnections" (*Dialectics of Nature*).

The Object of the Sciences

All sciences, including philosophy conducted as a science, have an "object" in the sense that each deals with a more or less distinct set of *questions arising out of human practice*. Of course, the questions of empirical science are of a different *type* from those of philosophy. For philosophical questions about "thought and its laws" are of a different type from, say, questions about chemical processes and their laws. And the deductive sciences, the various branches of mathematics, deal with their own special types of question too.

The methods of each science are evolved in practice to deal with the type of question tackled. So of course philosophical method must be different from that adopted in empirical sciences, just as the methods of mathematical sciences differ too. And within the empirical sciences, the social sciences differ from the natural sciences because of the different types of question they deal with.

But if the questions of different sciences *differ*, they are also *related*. If, then, we *relate* the questions of philosophy to those of the empirical sciences, and of mathematics too, we shall discover what Althusser with his abstract posing of antitheses denies—namely, that the development and use of the

[1] When John Lewis declares his concern for philosophical truth, Althusser says he is a bourgeois idealist who ignores the class struggle in philosophy and thereby undermines the revolutionary standpoint of the working class. But John Lewis is no more unconcerned with class struggle in philosophy than Althusser himself, despite what he says, is unconcerned with philosophical truth.

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other sciences in social practice requires that of philosophy *as a science*, just as philosophy for its part cannot be scientifically conducted in separation from the conduct of the other sciences.

That is what Engels started to demonstrate in *Anti-Dühring*, in order to show how communism must be informed by science if we are to win through to human emancipation from poverty and exploitation and from the bondage of the ideologies that justify and perpetuate them.[2]

The *whole* of Marxism, with Marxist philosophy as an integral part, must be developed and can indeed only be developed by us as "class struggle in the field of theory", as "politics in the field of theory". And it must be and can only be developed as *science*.

The social function of Marxist science is to inform the working-class struggle with scientific comprehension of the conditions and objectives of the struggle. By doing so, Marxism scientifically defines the objective of communism and demonstrates the way to win it. And it starts to establish the empirical-scientific comprehension of nature and of society, and with that *the philosophical-scientific comprehension of the operations of thinking*, including our thinking out purposes, ends and values, by which we direct our practical activities. This union of science, philosophy and class struggle is what is needed in order to emancipate ourselves from the conditions of the past and present, and to build communism.

3. WHO OR WHAT MAKES HISTORY?

The next point is about history.

Althusser opposes to what he calls "the thesis" of John Lewis: "It is man who makes history", his own "thesis" (which he calls that of "Marxism-Leninism"): "It is the masses which make history".

He says Lewis is in "a little difficulty". But be that as it may, Lewis has certainly made "a little difficulty" for Althusser by his incautious (but even so, hardly bourgeois and idealist) use of the collective name "Man".

Some people, including it seems Althusser, may take him to mean that history is "made" by an abstract and mysterious individual named "Man". But why suppose that he means anything so absurd? He certainly does not. He means: "*Men* make history." And in this usage, "men" includes women too. Indeed, the use of the collective name "Man" to mean exactly what is meant by "men and women" is not uncommon in English (nor, I believe, in French).

So John Lewis's thesis, "Man makes history", is only a repetition of a very well known thesis of Marx himself: "Men make their own history . . .", announced in the second paragraph of the first chapter of that major exposition of Historical Materialism, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

But Althusser proceeds to oppose "the thesis of Marxism-Leninism" to Marx's own thesis. And when he derisively asks John Lewis what he means by "make", he had better go back to Marx and ask what Marx meant by "make". The meaning is made quite clear by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, so one need not devote space to it here.

The Problem of "Transcendence"

Having objected to John Lewis's use of the noun "man", Althusser objects still more strongly to his use of the verb "transcend". For just as for Althusser the very sound of the word "man" conjures up the idealist bogy of "species-man" or of abstract "Man" who makes the history which real men have to live through, so the word "transcend" conjures

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[2] Althusser further asserts: "Philosophy has no history, in the sense in which science has a history." But the histories of philosophy and of science are alike histories of the posing of questions out of human practice, of the working out of methods of dealing with them, and of the relating of questions.

Marx and Engels remarked in *The German Ideology* that ideologies and theories in general have no *independent* history, because "men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking". In that sense, of course, philosophy "has no history". But neither has science. There is no history of philosophy independent of the history of science, and no history of either independent of that of "men developing their material production and their material intercourse".

In "developing their material production and their material intercourse" men develop theories about themselves and the world and, in connection with that, ideas about purpose, ends and values, in which the particular and generally class-determined purposes, ends and values of men are often ideologically disguised as the "objective" purpose, ends and values of God or the Universe. In philosophy such rival ideologies of rival classes come into collision and are fought out "in the field of theory". This, says Althusser, is "class struggle in the field of theory" and, indeed, "politics in the field of theory", in antithesis to science.

But this antithesis implies that *science* has as such nothing at all to do with our arriving at our concepts of purposes, ends and values. True, it has nothing much to do with it, for the exploiting classes; and hence arises the current insistence in *bourgeois* philosophy that science, which is only concerned with "fact", has nothing to do with "values". But for Marxism, our purposes, ends and values are *not* to be formulated in divorce from our *scientific* conception of the realities of our human condition and of the procedures and "laws" of human thinking. Marxism must repudiate the bourgeois ideological separation of "fact" and "value". Yet Althusser's antithesis of "class struggle in the field of theory", on the one hand, and "science" on the other, is based precisely on such a separation.

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up for him the idealist bogy of matter being transcended by spirit. He calls "transcendence" a "philosopher's word". Perhaps he has read too much of the wrong sort of philosophy.

But "transcend" is a perfectly good word to describe what happens in the course of material processes, although idealists use it for their own purposes of describing processes that are merely imaginary.

In the Preface to *Critique of Political Economy* Marx wrote that "the bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production. . . . This social formation, therefore, brings the pre-history of human society to a close." What could he mean—"pre-history"? In the *Eighteenth Brumaire* he wrote that "Men make their own history, but they do not make it . . . under circumstances chosen by themselves". But he looked forward to the time when men, by overcoming every "antagonistic form of the social process of production", will become masters of their circumstances. And then they will, as a result of their own struggles, have *transcended* their pre-history. They will "make their own history" in another way, superseding the way of their "pre-history".

In this connection, Althusser in his Reply to John Lewis sneers at the idealism of those who talk about aims of "liberty" and "human freedom". But these include both Marx and Engels, the latter of whom (in *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*) wrote that "man" will "become his own master, free", and the former that "beyond" the necessities of material production "begins the true realm of freedom". And Marx wrote that in no less a work than *Capital* itself (see Vol. 3, Chapter 48).

"Masses" and "Men"

As for Althusser's "thesis of Marxism-Leninism", it is totally misleading to *oppose* the thesis that "it is the masses which make history" to the Marxist thesis that "men make their own history". For what are "the masses" if not men? On the other hand, any "thesis" about "the masses" becomes so abstractly general as to become misleading *unless* it is well understood that "men make their own history". For as Marx and Engels wrote with emphasis in *The German Ideology*, "the first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals".[3]

[3] In real history, movements of "the masses" play a decisive part in all the most decisive historical events. But it is simply not true that "the masses" are invariably active in determining the course of history in all places at all periods. And certainly, the determining role of various exploiting classes has been much to the fore up to 1917. For example, one can say with truth that "the masses" made the French Revolution of 1789, but the society which actually ensued upon it was largely shaped by the French bourgeoisie and not by "the masses" at all.

So if "Marxism-Leninism" says, "No, its *not men* who make history *but the masses*", then "Marxism-Leninism" is certainly talking nonsense. But of course, *real* Marxism-Leninism says nothing so stupid.

Real Marxism-Leninism has a lot to say (as indeed Althusser himself emphasises) about *how* the masses make history. It not only has a lot to say about the role of exploiting classes in making history, it has a lot to say about the role of leadership and of individuals in making history. In short, real Marxism-Leninism does not *oppose* Marx's thesis that "men make their own history", but goes on to elaborate *how* men make their own history in class struggle and how, in particular, we can make it *now* through the leadership of a revolutionary mass movement in this present epoch of imperialism and socialist revolution.

But all this being so, then why should Althusser be so insistent that as well as not allowing us to talk about "man" neither should "Marxism-Leninism" allow us to talk about the human "subject"?

"The question is no longer posed in terms of 'man' ", he informs us. All right, let us say "men". But then he continues: "It is no longer a question of looking for a 'subject' in history. It is no longer a question of *who* makes history."

Instead of "men who . . ." he wants us to say "masses which . . .". But is not this absurd? For the actions of "the masses which" do various things are precisely the actions of "men who" act in various ways and enter into various relations with each other and with external objects. One cannot oppose the one to the other as antithetical "theses", and make any sense of it. The class struggle is a struggle of *men* acting as men—not between merely impersonal bodies such as "classes" or "masses".

But if there are "men who . . .", then these men are precisely what any competent Marxist refers to if he speaks of a "subject" in active relation with other subjects and with objects. So as for "a 'subject' in history", there he (and she) always is and we know him (and her) well—the human subject in infinitely various activity and personality.

Althusser, however, states categorically that "history is a process without a subject". That is precisely what it is *not*. And if one lets oneself be persuaded into thinking in such an abstract way, then one will merely fail to grasp the differences and relation between human activity and natural process, and between natural and social science.

4. "ONE CAN ONLY KNOW WHAT EXISTS"

Althusser next opposes to the "thesis" of John Lewis that "Man only knows what he himself does", the "thesis" of "Marxism-Leninism" that "One can only know what exists".

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Another "little difficulty" of merely verbal origin has arisen here, to occasion this posing of the one "thesis" against the other.

Does John Lewis (or any other Marxist) mean to say that we know only ourselves and what we ourselves do, and nothing about the objects which confront us and with which we enter into cognitive relations when we know them? Of course not.

If, for example, one is looking at a table, one *knows* one is *looking* at it and, by looking at it, one gets to know something about *it*. If no table existed one could not *look at it*, and if one did not look at it one would never *know* that it *existed*. Indeed, if one knows something, something exists which can be known. And unless it existed, one could not know it.

The point is simply that we come to *know* something only by *doing* something in relation to it. Marx himself often stressed this simple point, and it in no way contradicts the fact that "one can only know what exists".

It is true that no little difficulty arises if one says that we *know* only according to what we *do*, without appreciating (as some idealist philosophers have not appreciated) that we can know only what *exists*. But on the other hand, no less a difficulty arises if one says that one can know only what exists, without appreciating that we can *know* it only through *our own activity*, and can know it only in so far as in our own activity we have *related ourselves* with it and it with ourselves.[4]

Althusser says that "what exists . . . exists independently of the subjectivity which knows it". With this bare statement none can quarrel without (as Althusser rightly remarks) renouncing Marxist views "about materiality and about objectivity". But what he fails to mention is precisely what John Lewis has been concerned to stress, the differences between knowledge of things which is merely *abstract* knowledge of them, and the more *concrete* (or adequate, comprehensive and useful) knowledge of them in which Marxism is interested and which science helps us to get.

Just to say that a particular thing exists and that we know it exists is indeed an extremely *abstract* statement. For things exist only in relation, and to speak in *concrete* terms one must try to trace out relationships, outside of which nothing exists at all. The so-called "thing-in-itself", abstracted from all relationship, is a nothing, a "mere" abstraction.

Things in their Relationships

The whole object of materialist dialectics is, as Lenin has said, to know things in their relationships, to achieve a "concrete analysis of concrete conditions". For (as with full agreement he quoted from Hegel) "the truth is always concrete".

"One can only know what exists" is thus a "thesis" of the most abstract variety, little more, indeed, than a mere "truism". It is in fact not a specifically "Marxist-Leninist" thesis at all, since all so-called "realist" philosophers have always upheld it. What Marxism-Leninism is more concerned with is the means and methods of getting concrete useful knowledge by getting to know about existing things in their relationships.

If a thing can exist only in its relationships, it does not however follow (as idealist philosophers who have propounded the esoteric doctrine of so-called "internal" relations have maintained) that no particular thing could exist as it does except in those particular relationships in which it is in fact found to exist. Knowledge can, it is true, never become complete or "absolute", because in all knowing abstraction must to a greater or lesser extent be made from the totality of concrete relationships. But one can nevertheless get to know quite a lot about particular things and sorts of things without having to know all about all their relationships.

Yet more concrete knowledge always depends on finding out the relationships. And "concrete truth", as distinct from merely "abstract" truth, is always expressed by speaking of things as they are in their relationships.

Things in Relationship with Us

Everything *we* know has become known to *us* only by our activity of relating ourselves with it and it with us. So when we know a thing, we can know it only as it is in relationship with us. Hence when we speak of it out of its relationship with us we always abstract from that relationship, and speak relatively abstractly.

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[4] That Althusser himself is in some little difficulty on the topic of knowledge is shown by his proceeding to assert: "Scientific knowledge . . . is actually the result of a complex process which has no real subject or goal."

But scientific knowledge is obtained and created by the activities (mostly combined or co-operative activities) of individual people. And any process of the creation of some result by conscious human activity is significantly different from any process into which human activity does not enter. In the sense of "subject" where this word denotes a conscious human individual who actively relates himself with objects and objects with himself, human activities have a "subject", namely, the people who perform them. So obviously, scientific knowledge is the result of a complex process which *does* have "a subject", namely, active people. And as conscious human activity it *does* have a "goal", namely, it is directed towards trying to "know what exists" so that people can become in practice better informed.

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This does *not* mean that nothing exists or ever could have existed except in some relationship with us. For the relationship of a thing with us which is brought into being when we get to know it is not a necessary condition for its existence in the rest of its relationships. As Lenin said, refuting idealism in *Materialism and Emprio-Criticism*, that would entail the absurdity of saying that nothing ever goes on or has gone on except when *we* are there or have been there to witness it.

But it *does* mean that for us to speak of things out of relation to ourselves is always to speak relatively *abstractly*; and that for us, *concrete knowledge* entails knowing things in relation to ourselves and ourselves in relation to things, and *concrete truth* must always be about such relationship.

Thus, for example, to talk about "atoms and molecules" as they exist independently of "the subjectivity that knows" them is to talk only abstractly. "Pure physics" is, indeed, the most abstract of the sciences.

Hence to posit simply the existence of "the material world" independent of ourselves is only to posit an abstraction. And this is what such Marxist thinkers as Antonio Gramsci have been getting at in their criticisms of abstract metaphysical "materialism"; and what John Lewis has been getting at too.

Marxism and Marxism-Leninism do not propose that we simply get to know "the world" as it exists independently of us, independently of "the subjectivity that knows it". Marxism is, as Althusser says, totally opposed to the idealism which says that knowledge is confined to knowing "the subjectivity that knows". But it is also opposed to the idea that knowledge is only the abstract knowledge of what exists independent of relationship with "man".

With Althusser, dialectical materialism is lost to view in his antithetical posing of one abstract "thesis" against another.

5. THE FORMATION OF MARX'S THOUGHT

In the latter part of his Reply, Althusser concludes (though more, perhaps, in sorrow than in anger) that John Lewis's alleged "theses" can only "disarm" the workers. For, he says, if they are taught that "it is men who make history" that "tends to make them think that they are all-powerful" just as "men". One might as well say that to teach them that "it is the masses which make history" disarms them, because it "tends" to make them think they are all-powerful just as masses providing they bash on regardless in mass actions. The fact is that *all* merely abstract "theses" are *at best* useless. Marxism does not "arm" the workers with abstract "theses" but with what Lenin called "the concrete analysis of concrete conditions".[5]

This brings us finally to some questions about "the formation of Marx's thought", concerning which Lewis accuses Althusser of not understanding it, and Althusser replies that Lewis has taken Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (and other writings of the same period) as statements of Marxist positions whereas they were really nothing of the sort.

Althusser, I think rightly, says that no Marxist should without reservation accept what is written in the *1844 Manuscripts* as "Marxism". But he goes much further than that. For he poses the later works of Marx against the earlier, and so, as usual, presents us with an *antithesis*—on the one hand, the works of 1844, on the other those of 1845 and after. Consequently, he has to announce that there was a "break" separating the one from the other. Posing things in antithesis, he can only say that the one supplants the other and rubs it out. He ignores the real-life development in which the later position, having been already in formation in the earlier, continues to propound fundamental themes earlier propounded.

Because he poses antitheses, Althusser approaches the study of the works of Marx with a pre-conceived scheme in his own head about how Marxism came to supplant pre-Marxism. And he can claim that it is derived from the facts because with any pre-conceived scheme one can always find a selection of facts to verify it.[6]

As for the works dating from 1845, Althusser is without question right when he says that in them Marx began to "set out a number of new concepts", which "laid down the foundations" of a new science—"mode of production, productive forces, relations of production, infra-structure and super-

[5] Marxism is *science* about men and society which arms the workers in that way. Marx discovered and formulated the fundamental concepts of that science. And this enabled him, and Marxism after him, to begin to comprehend the relationship of man and nature and of natural and social sciences, and to consolidate and complete this comprehension by arriving at a scientific philosophy. The latter has the findings of the sciences of nature and of man as its premises and supplements them by working out the "laws" of revolutionary thinking for the informing of revolutionary practice.

[6] It is, indeed, very much like the scheme recently proposed at Princeton University, USA, by Professor Kuhn about the history of science, according to which there from time to time occurs a sudden leap from one set of fundamental concepts to another, which he calls "the paradigm shift". For Althusser, Marx used one "paradigm" in 1844 and shifted to another and completely different one in 1845. But real life is not like that.

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structure, ideologies, etc." At this period of time and not earlier Marx formulated the fundamental concepts for "the science of history" (in fact it could be given a broader description—"the sciences of man and society").

The Question of the "Break"

So a break, or break through, there certainly was after 1845. But did it mean the complete *supplanting*, by a new science, of everything Marx had written in 1844? In particular, did the *science*, the fundamental concepts for which were precisely stated only after 1845, supplant and rub out the general standpoint of what Marx had called "humanism" in 1844? And are the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and the 1844 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* works whose whole content is nullified as a contribution to Marxism by the subsequent scientific achievement?

No. Points Marx made in his 1844 works in fact provided the direct road to the break through in science achieved not long afterwards.

Indeed, compared with the works of revolutionary democratic journalism Marx wrote *before* 1844, a big change in fact came about *in 1844*. Actually, in the *1844 Manuscripts* and the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* he began a radical criticism of his former standpoint, and a general formulation of a new one, which directly led to the whole of his subsequent achievements.

In the 1844 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* Marx criticised the Hegelian theory of the State, as the super-power which stands "above" what was then called "civil society", by pointing to the verifiable material historical fact that the State is itself the product of the development of civil society, formed to protect property and propertied interests. This criticism of Hegel's philosophy of the State (the central part of "the Philosophy of Law") marked the start of the Marxist theory of class struggle, revolutionary politics and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is basic for the whole subsequently developed standpoint of revolutionary Marxism.

Althusser speaks of an "epistemological break" in 1845. But here, plain for everyone to read, the "epistemological break" is prematurely announced in 1844. It is not, as Althusser rather puzzlingly tries to make out in his "self-criticism", a "political evolution" which preceded Marx's "philosophical evolution" which preceded his scientific discovery or "epistemological break". How tortuous can one get when trying to defend a preconceived "thesis"? It is a break, away from the idealist system of deducing the empirically verified *reality* of the State from the *Idea* of the State, towards the materialist and scientific procedure of basing the *idea*, or theory, of the State on the empirically verified *reality* of the State. In other words (and if words like "epistemological" have any meaning, which perhaps they sometimes do not), it is an "epistemological break".

"Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"

Coming now to the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, one finds that they conclude with a section in which Marx generalises his objections to Hegel's philosophy of the State into a criticism of "the Hegelian Dialectic and Hegel's Philosophy as a Whole". Althusser himself, in *Pour Marx*, has rather cogently argued that Marx did not simply "take over" the Hegelian Dialectic but transformed it into something quite different. Well, it was in the *1844 Manuscripts* that Marx himself quite clearly announced that this was what was to be done.

But, says Althusser, Marx was in 1844 still engrossed with "alienation" and "the negation of the negation" as "philosophical categories". Only afterwards did "these philosophical categories inherited from the past" disappear. No, it was precisely in the *1844 Manuscripts* that Marx criticised the "philosophical categories", though it is perfectly true that he did not yet in 1844 succeed in eliminating them finally. That was because he had not yet succeeded in formulating the *fundamental concepts* of a *science* about "man".

Hegel said that "philosophical categories" somehow realise themselves in real processes, so that one can finally understand real processes only by deducing them from preconceived "philosophical categories".[7] So he said that all the processes in human life described by the word "alienation" were deducible from and to be understood in terms of Mind or Spirit performing a "self-alienation" in external processes before eventually "returning into itself" by "the negation of the negation".

But all that is great nonsense, said Marx in 1844. On the contrary, we must investigate the real processes of life and society, and then explain what goes on and arrive at general ideas and conclusions about it in terms of the reality as we find it. So in the Preface to the *1844 Manuscripts* he insisted, though not yet, as we shall see, with full justification: "My results have been attained by means of a wholly empirical analysis."

The *1844 Manuscripts* begin with a discussion about wages, profits and rents, and from that go on to show that *labour*, the basis for all human society, has become "estranged" or "alienated" as a result of the labourer working for another and his instruments

[7] In point of terminology, *Hegel* would certainly not have grouped "alienation" and "negation of negation" together and called them "philosophical categories". But to save trouble, I have followed Althusser's extremely slipshod formulation.

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and products becoming the property of another. Here Marx does *not* deduce "alienated labour" from the "philosophical category" of "alienation", but deals with it as he finds it in human society.

In 1844, then, Marx in fact proposed and started the scientific work of a "wholly empirical analysis" of human society in general and of capitalist society in particular on which he was engaged for the rest of his life. Althusser is quite right that in this work a "point of no return" was only reached when Marx managed to formulate clearly and explicitly the "fundamental concepts" for science in this field—"forces of production", "relations of production", and so on. Only after that could his investigations take on the strictly scientific character they afterwards did.

Of course the *1844 Manuscripts* are no scientific work like *Capital*. And in that sense, *Capital* does supplant them. But it does not do so by way of *repudiating* the account of "alienation" and "alienated labour" given in the *1844 Manuscripts*, but rather by way of affording a strictly scientific analysis of what was then only postulated and described only in a very general way and in imprecise and ambiguous language.

Alienation

All this explains the, for Althusser, rather embarrassing fact that Marx still used the word "alienation" in some of his later and strictly scientific work. It was not, however, as Althusser seems to think, an "intermittent survival"—a kind of occasional lapse on Marx's part into the confusion and bad language of his pre-scientific past. He continued to use the word "alienation" whenever *appropriate*—quite often in *Grundrisse*, which contains a long analysis of the effects of division of labour, private property and exploitation on human relations generally, which are very appropriately called "alienation" effects; less often in *Capital*; and not at all in *The Communist Manifesto*, where such terminology would hardly have suited the style required for the public manifesto of a political party.

In the *1844 Manuscripts* the word "alienation" comes into use as a general many-purpose word to describe a whole gamut of phenomena of human life consequent on division of labour and private property and which will be overcome by the realisation of communism. When these phenomena are scientifically investigated and analysed in Marx's later work, the general many-purpose word is very properly replaced, as a rule, by an analytic scientific terminology.

At the same time Marx did, in 1844, conceive of private property as a consequence of the alienation of labour, in a way derived from the idea that the "self-alienation of the human essence" leads first to labour being alienated and then to private property. So while on the one hand he criticised "philosophical categories", on the other hand he still had recourse to them as ultimate factors in explanation. Subsequently, beginning with *The German Ideology* in 1846, he (and Engels) began to work out how all the "alienation" phenomena were consequent on the division of labour introduced with the development of productive forces.

Marx's treatment of "alienation" in the *1844 Manuscripts* is in fact inconsistent. On the one hand, there are a whole range of facts of human life to be scientifically investigated so as to see how we can in revolutionary practice eliminate them. On the other hand, there are the "philosophical categories" in terms of which he still tacitly assumes both the facts and the process of their elimination must be in the last analysis be comprehended.

The major weakness of the *1844 Manuscripts*, in respect of which the standpoint of 1844 really is *supplanted* by that of *scientific* communism, so that it becomes gravely misleading to take the 1844 writings as Marxist "gospel", lies in the way Marx understood—or still misunderstood—*communism* in 1844.[8]

Communism

Communism is unmistakably presented in 1844 as the consummation of the *millennium*. The concept of communism is still "millennial" and in that respect still "utopian". Enormous stress is laid on the "dehumanisation" suffered by the working class. Indeed, the workers are described as destined to lose all human semblance until reduced, by "alienated labour", to the condition of what, had the word been then current, might be called a set of zombies. With this goes a very downright and unqualified statement of a doctrine of "absolute impoverishment". Every day and in every way the workers' condition must inexorably become worse and worse. Finally, they will revolt. And then everything will turn into its opposite. From being dehumanised the people will all become in the truest sense "human". Even the human senses will change, and become "true" human senses! Nature and man will be brought into a state of complete and lasting harmony.

Communism is thus presented as "the human essence" returning "to itself". It is "the negation of the negation". Man must become completely dehumanised in order by the negation of this inhuman condition to become in the end completely human.

It is not very difficult to recognise in this doctrine a version of the Fall of Man and of the arrival of

[8] This weakness explains, incidentally, Marx's expressions of rather uncritical admiration of Feuerbach in 1844, whereas later, as Althusser points out, he became much more critical.

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the New Jerusalem after the most horrific misfortunes. And the account rendered of the workers' "dehumanisation" and eventual realisation of humanity in fact covers up what Marx afterwards came to understand so well (very largely due to the influence of Engels, who had got to know the workers at first hand in England and with whom Marx began to collaborate only in 1845)—that not by becoming dehumanised and rising only when reduced to sub-human stature, but by the application of intelligence and organisation, the workers could make an end to capitalism and advance to communism.

Engels afterwards wrote that Marxism converted Socialism from Utopia into Science. That is exactly correct. But in 1844 Marx was still labouring under utopian delusions.

The millennialism and utopianism in the *1844 Manuscripts* is, as becomes fairly obvious, directly connected with taking "the negation of the negation" from Hegel as a "philosophical category". The "negation of the negation" has to be realised after the workers have been rendered thoroughly dehumanised in alienated labour. So this philosophical deduction gets in the way of and displaces the analysis of the social, economic and political processes at work—which was however already begun in the treatment of "alienation" in the very same work, and which Marx got onto a scientific footing after he had succeeded in formulating the fundamental concepts by the application of which to do it.[9]

6. MARXISM AND "HUMANISM"

So what in the end can one conclude from Althusser's dispute with Lewis?

Lewis talks about "man" when he means "men", and he uncritically takes the *1844 Manuscripts* to be a basic and seminal statement of Marxism without reckoning that they were produced before Marx had arrived at his formulation of fundamental scientific concepts for comprehending the affairs of men. But, for his part, Althusser is a Marxist who seems not to have grasped the full implications of materialist dialectics. This leads to his not understanding what other Marxists are trying to say, because he tries to reduce it to a set of simplified abstract "theses"; and to him himself announcing his own simplified abstract "theses". If he thinks that this is to introduce rigorously scientific formulations into Marxism, then it seems to me he is mistaken.

In particular, and this is perhaps the main thing, he has been misled into posing a sharp antithesis between scientific materialist Marxism and "humanism". He thinks that what was wrong with Marx's works in 1844 was that Marx was then still a bourgeois "humanist" (talking about "man"). But, while fully agreeing with him that the 1844 works are not yet scientific Marxism, it seems to me that this is not the correct diagnosis.

In the Tradition of Humanism

The word "Marxism" has a fairly precise meaning, whereas the word "humanism" has not. Nor has "materialism" for that matter, though "dialectical materialism" has. Humanism is a large and vague *tradition*, the unifying feature of which is a conviction that men work out their own affairs without subordination to "divine" or "supernatural" dictate or intervention, and that, as Marx himself put it in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, "man is the highest being for man". He wrote that, by the way, in opposition to those who considered some men as mere "chattels" or "objects" to be subordinated to the rule of others, and all men as mere creatures of God. So despite the use of the word "man", Marx's meaning is, in its context, tolerably clear.

Marxism, then, is *undoubtedly* in the tradition of humanism—just as it is in the tradition of materialism (not all humanism is materialism). So Marx never had occasion to go back on what he said about humanism in 1844. In fact, in *The Holy Family* (written in 1845 and therefore just scraping home into the Althusserian Canon, and containing a very emphatic statement of the *materialist* standpoint) Marx and Engels actually *equated* materialism, humanism and communism.

Althusser has unfortunately allowed his justifiable opposition to various brands of *bourgeois* humanism to lead him to counterposing Marxism against humanism. In particular, his opposition against the efforts of his compatriot Roger Garaudy to substitute bourgeois humanism for Marxism led to his announcing anti-humanist "theses" against Garaudy's humanist ones.

But Marxism is a scientific theory about men and about how men can work out their human destiny for themselves. And Marxism does value "liberty" and "equality" and "human freedom". It frees these concepts (I almost called them "noble" ones) from idealistic dross and bourgeois hypocrisy, and shows how a fully human freedom can be won and become the goal we strive for. And that is humanism.

[9] As for what Althusser regards as the rather unfortunate mention of "the negation of the negation" in *Capital*, it is quite clear in the context that Marx did *not* regard the restoration of personal property to producers under socialism after they had lost it under capitalism as the consequence of the inexorable realisation in human affairs of a philosophical category. So it was not a case of "intermittent survival" in Marx's writings of a "philosophical category". Marx was simply pointing out, in an aside, that Hegel's philosophical category of "the negation of the negation" was in fact the "reflection" of a mode of development characteristic of real processes, whereas Hegel had supposed the real processes to be only the "realisation" of the category.

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A French View of William Morris

A. L. Morton

It has taken a long time for the work of William Morris to secure proper appreciation—even in Britain and even among Marxists. As late as 1933 a reading list prepared by Workers' Bookshops included *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* and *News from Nowhere* with the comment:

> "Morris was perhaps more of an Anarchist than a Marxist, a literary gent with his heart but not his head in the right place, but he was one of the early British followers of Marx. The first book, largely written by Bax, is good."

It would be difficult to cram more errors into so few words, but such an estimate could not have been made even a year later, after R. Page Arnot's *William Morris, a Vindication* appeared to start putting the record straight, and his work, developed by E. P. Thompson, Ray Watkinson and others, has made such misunderstanding possible only to the wilfully ignorant.

In Europe the vindication has been much slower and is still far from complete, but if there is one man who has done more than any other to advance the understanding of Morris, that man is Dr Paul Meier. In 1961 he published an excellent translation of *News from Nowhere* with an introduction which was probably the best introduction to that masterpiece to appear in any language. Now *Editions Sociales* (Paris) has issued his monumental *La Pensée Utopique de William Morris*. This is in essentials a full study of *News from Nowhere*, not as an isolated flight of the imagination but as the centre from which the work of Morris can be seen and evaluated as a whole. Substantial as it is—running to 862 large pages—Dr Meier explains in his Introduction how much that he would have wished to include had to be sacrificed in order to concentrate on his main theme, "his utopian thought, that is to say his conception of the future society and the prospects for the human race." Morris' utopian thought, as he says, involved not only political thought, but philosophical, economic, aesthetic, moral, social and historical thought on a scale which demanded such extensive treatment that his work "must be regarded as a fragment of a study which still needs to be completed." Dr Meier is too modest. I should like to say at the outset that his book must at once be regarded as among the main and really essential contributions to the study of Morris.

Sources and Influences

His work is divided into three Parts of very unequal length. The first consists of two mainly preliminary chapters. Then Part Two deals with the many writers who can be regarded as sources and influences. These are extremely varied, including More, Samuel Butler, Bellamy, Cobbett, Richard Jefferies and Ruskin, as well as English romantic poets and French and English utopian socialists. On all these Dr Meier has things to say that are new in themselves and will provoke new ideas in his readers. What is perhaps the most striking thing is the way in which, in almost every case, Morris took just what he needed from More, from Ruskin and even from Bellamy, ignored the rest and then went far beyond his original teachers.

Thus Morris, as Dr Meier points out, follows More in attributing the equalitarian abundance of his utopia to two causes—the obligation upon all to labour and the insistence that all labour should be devoted to the production of genuinely useful goods. For More, writing in the sixteenth century when the lives of the masses were of the starkest simplicity, this meant chiefly the avoidance of wasteful luxury. Nineteenth century capitalism had created new forms for an old problem. Machine production, requiring an ever-expanding market, had diverted more and more human labour into the production of consumer trash—always remembering that this includes not only shoddy goods for the poor but tasteless and expensive goods for the rich. The multiplication of artificial wants, which in our day has been immeasurably extended, had created, as Morris said of Bellamy's "cockney" utopia, *Looking Backward*, "a huge standing army . . . compelled by some mysterious fate to unceasing anxiety for the production of wares to satisfy every caprice, however absurd, that may cast up amongst them." In a rational, equalitarian and truly human society, "it is probable that much of our so-called "refinement", our luxury—in short, our civilisation would have to be sacrificed."[1] Abundance, for Morris, always meant a sufficiency of goods and satisfactions of the highest quality, not an endless piling up of "cheap and nasty wares which are the mainstay of com-

[1] *The Commonweal*, 1889.

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petitive commerce, and are, indeed, slave wares, made by and for slaves."[2]

In a socialist society, Morris thought, men would for the first time be able to ask themselves what they really needed to enjoy a full, happy and dignified life, and he believed that the answer might be very different from any that might be given in his day—or ours. Yet if he followed More in proscribing useless production he entirely rejected More's asceticism. In Utopia we find a rather dull uniformity—in architecture, in dress, in food, in recreations. For this we should not blame More overmuch, since at the existing level of the productive forces the benefits Utopia provided could hardly have been obtainable in any other way. Morris, however, demands variety, colour, the full acceptance of the delights of the earth and the senses. Similarly they agree upon the dignity of manual labour. But while for More, a man of the study, this remained "an austere obligation", since no man had the right to evade his share of the curse imposed upon Adam, Morris, who found his greatest happiness in thinking through his hands, saw human labour not as man's curse but, if properly applied to right ends, a source of his highest pleasure and the foundation of his social life.

The case of Bellamy's influence is perhaps more curious. As is well known the writing of *News from Nowhere* was stimulated by an indignant disagreement with Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, yet, as Dr Meier points out, this did not prevent certain borrowings, and, he says, Morris' injustice was only equalled by his ingratitude:

> "Edward Bellamy was the first Anglo-Saxon utopian before Morris to abandon the exploration of unknown lands in order to build in his own country and to replace geographical distance with distance in time. This new and original plan springs, in each case, from an overriding doctrinal need to prove to contemporaries and fellow-countrymen that socialism is possible."

Cobbett might seem a less likely influence, but the two men had much more in common than a certain tendency to idealise the Middle Ages. Morris' biographer Mackail tells us that he knew *Rural Rides* "almost by heart", and in *News from Nowhere* we can find what Cobbett says about the folly of schools and the education of children reproduced almost word for word. If I may venture, for once, a miniscule dissent, it is that Dr Meier seems to me somewhat to underrate the positive merits of the rather free-wheeling ideas of Cobbett and of Morris on education. But then, if as Morris says of Bellamy, a utopia must be considered as "the expression of the temperament of the author", the interpretation of a utopia must depend partly on the temperament of the reader.

Morris' First Master

The question of the influence of Ruskin upon Morris takes us into deeper matters. He first read Ruskin while at Oxford and never ceased to regard him with deep respect, even reverence, though that did not prevent him from describing the fifth volume of *Modern Painters*, in an iconoclastic mood, as "mostly gammon". (Perhaps this would be a good point to mention, in parenthesis, the excellence of Dr Meier's translation of Morris' highly personal style. "Mostly gammon" appears as "un tissu de balivernes.") His approach to Ruskin was first of all aesthetic, but the latter's conception of the relations of art, labour and social life came to form the basis from which all his later thought developed. He saw the essence of this teaching in the chapter of *The Stones of Venice* called *The Nature of Gothic*, which, near the end of his life, he described as "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century":

> "For the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour: that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us today, there have been times when he did rejoice in it; and lastly, that unless man's work once again becomes a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain and therefore live in pain."[3]

Yet the limitations of Ruskin, his paternalism, his moralising, his bias towards an authoritarian and hierarchic society, are so clear to us today that it is not quite easy for us to see why he was regarded as a master-teacher not only by Morris but by many of the most able and intelligent workers. To this problem Dr Meier devotes some perceptive pages. One reason was the paucity, indeed the virtual absence, of socialist literature. The works of Marx were then, and for long after, inaccessible. No English worker could read *Capital* before its translation in 1886—Morris was fortunate to be able to read it in French. It was not till the middle of the 1880s that the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League began to fill the gap with a dribble of pamphlets. In this situation *any* work which expressed sympathy with the workers' cause or criticised any respect of capitalism was likely to be welcomed. Ruskin's prophetic wrath, his hatred

[2] *Art, Wealth and Riches.*

[3] Preface to Kelmscott Press edition of *The Nature of Gothic.*

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of the *effects* of capitalism, evoked a ready response. More important, despite his lack of precision, was his appreciation of the importance of the workers and his understanding, however imperfect, of their position in society. The labour of the industrious, he declared, maintained a social structure dominated by a minority of idle exploiters:

> "The squire is essentially an idle person who has possession of land, and lends it, but does not use it; and the capitalist is essentially an idle person, who has possession of tools, and lends them, but does not use them; while the labourer, by definition, is a laborious person, and by presumption a penniless one, who is obliged to borrow both land and tools; and paying, rent on the one, and profit on the other, what will maintain the squire and the capitalist, digs finally a remnant of roots, wherewith to maintain himself."[4]

Morris was not wilfully blind to Ruskin's failings. He saw them and understood their reasons but was able to go beyond them to the positive core. Dr Meier quotes a passage from the historian of Fabianism, Edward Pease, who says of Ruskin that "books so eminently suitable for the young ladies of Victorian schoolrooms could hardly attract modern minds formed by Comte and Spencer."[5] But may the truth not be that while reading Ruskin prepared Morris to understand Marx, reading Comte and Spencer helped to make the Fabians incapable of doing so? As Morris said in a lecture:

> "I cannot tell you whether it was about this time that I first heard of socialism as a definite movement, but I know that I had come to these conclusions a good deal through reading John Ruskin's works, and that I focussed so to say his views on the matter of my work and my rising sense of injustice, probably more than he intended, and that the result of all that was that I was quite ready for Socialism when I came across it in a definite form, as a political party with distinct aims for a revolution in society."[6]

This was indeed the experience of a number of English Socialists in this time.

Morris and Marx

This is the crux of the matter, for, when all has been said, Marx, and not Ruskin or any other, proved to be the greatest influence in Morris' mature thought. Many interested parties have tried to show that his study of Marx was superficial and its influence slight, but the evidence points overwhelmingly in the opposite direction. One telling example given by Dr Meier was new to me. T. J. Cobden-Sanderson was a friend of Morris and a well known bookbinder. In 1884 Morris sent him his copy of *Capital*, in French, and, presumably, like most French books, in paperback, for rebinding. In his journal Codben-Sanderson noted that the book, "before it came to me to be bound, had been worn to loose sections by his own constant study of it."

Yet it is not mainly on such evidence, striking as it is, that Dr Meier relies, but on that of the writings of Morris himself, which he analyses with the utmost thoroughness to show how closely the ideas contained in them correspond with those of Marx. What is perhaps specially interesting is the fact that although Morris did not begin his study of Marx till the 1880s—late in his life—his earlier writings, though much less precise, contain much that could be developed in a Marxist direction and remarkably little that had to be abandoned. One might almost say that he was a natural Marxist, even if he does speak of the "confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work (*Capital*)." It was fortunate that this was so, for there were few men in England at that time qualified to give him much help. Dr Meier points out that Hyndman, Scheu and Aveling, while reaching some understanding of Marxist economics, were unable to go further, "and it is this which explains their rather narrow schematicism." Belfort Bax, on the other hand, a much closer friend and an intimate collaborator with Morris over a number of years, "seems in his personal writings to have concerned himself very little with the mechanics of capitalist exploitation but to have concentrated his interest on problems of the superstructure."

The result was that when they came to write *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* they were forced into a joint exploration of territory in which neither felt quite at home. This proved an advantage. Morris learnt while teaching and Dr Meier contrasts the easy style of this joint work with the "heavy and sometimes almost unreadable prose of Bax when writing alone." This, he adds, is clear evidence of the falsity of Bruce Glasier's allegation that the book is really the work of Bax to which Morris added only a few trimmings. In fact, the hand of Morris is clear upon almost every page.

The last chapter of Part Two of *La Pensée Utopique* is therefore concerned with the influence of Marx on Morris. It discusses also the personal relations between Morris and Engels, upon which it is not necessary to enlarge here since this was the subject of a recent article by Dr Meier in *Marxism Today* (May 1972).

Communist Society

Part Three, comprising more than half the length of the book, under the title Communist Society,

[4] *Fors Clavigera* I. 439.
[5] Retranslated from Dr Meier's French.
[6] *How Shall We Live Then?*

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deals with Morris' utopian thought, his ideas about the future. In a sense this is also a continuation of the discussion of Marx's influence upon him. Marx never cared to commit himself about the shape of the future except in the most general terms, yet much that he wrote is relevant to the future, and it is upon this which Morris seizes (as he always seized upon whatever in any of the people who influenced him he felt would best serve his purpose) and develops in his own fashion. He did this in a variety of ways in different places. It is apparent in such lectures as *How We Live and How We Might Live*, *A Factory as it Might Be*, in *The Society of the Future* and in *How Shall We Live Then?* which Dr Meier discovered recently in the archives of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and which was published for the first time in the *International Review of Social History* in 1971. But it is above all in *News from Nowhere* that his vision of the future is most fully disclosed, and *La Pensée Utopique* can in a sense be regarded as an extended commentary upon what Dr Meier, rightly I am sure, regards as Morris central work.

A list of the chapter titles of this Part may give some idea of its scope. They are:

> Barbarism or Socialism: The Dialectics of an Alternative.
> The Necessity of Utopia.
> Socialism—the Two Stages.
> The First Stage.
> The Second Stage—the Withering away of the State.
> The Productive Forces.
> "From each according to his capacity . . ."
> ". . . To each according to his need."
> Beauty in Every-day Life.
> The Dialectics of Art and History.
> Man.

Clearly there is here a greater wealth of matter than can possibly be touched upon in a single review, and I shall confine myself to a single topic—what Morris had to say about the two stages in the evolution of socialist society. Dr Meier devotes particular attention to this theme and nothing illustrates better how far Morris was in advance of his contemporaries in his understanding of Marxism.

The Two Stages

Marx outlined his views in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1875. In the first stage, that following immediately upon the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism:

> "What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as if it had *developed on a basis of its own*, but on the contrary as *it emerges from capitalist society*, which is thus in every respect tainted economically, morally and intellectually with the hereditary diseases of the old society from whose womb it is emerging. In this way the individual producer receives back again from society, with deductions, exactly what he gives. . . . The right of the producers is *proportional* to the amount of labour they contribute".

As these amounts will be unequal, a measure of inequality will be unavoidable at this stage. However:

> "In a higher phase of communist society, after the tyrannical subordination of individuals according to the distribution of labour and thereby also the distinction between manual and intellectual work have disappeared, after labour has become not merely a means to live but is in itself the first necessity of living, after the powers of production have also increased and all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely together with the all round development of the individual, then and then only can the narrow bourgeois horizon of rights be left far behind and society will inscribe on its banner: 'From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need.' "

This was also the view of Morris, developed in the narrative of *News from Nowhere* and in a more abstract way in such a lecture as *True and False Society*, where he writes:

> "I will recapitulate, then, the two views taken among Socialists as to the future of society. According to the first, the State—that is, the nation organised for unwasteful production and exchange of wealth—will be the sole possessor of the national plant and stock, the sole employer of labour, which she will so regulate in the general interest that no man will ever need to fear lack of employment and due earnings therefrom. . . . This view points to an attempt to give everybody the full worth of the productive work done by him. . . .
>
> "According to the other view the centralised nation would give place to a federation of communities who would hold all wealth in common, and would use that wealth for satisfying the needs of each member, only exacting from each that he should do his best according to his capacity towards the production of the common wealth. . . . This view intends complete equality of condition for everyone, though life would be, as always, varied by the differences of capacity and disposition; and emulation in working for the common good would supply the place of competition as an incentive.
>
> These two views of the future of society are sometimes opposed to each other as Socialism and Communism, but to my mind the latter is simply the necessary development of the former, which implies a transition period, during which people would be getting rid of the habits of mind bred by long ages of tyranny and commercial competition, and be learning that it is to the interest of each that all should thrive."

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The identity of these views is as remarkable as the similarity of the language in which they are expressed. This is the more remarkable since the *Critique* was not published, or at all known outside a very limited circle, at the time Morris was writing. Dr Meier believes that he could only have seen it, or learnt of its contents, from Engels, into whose hands the manuscript came after the death of Marx. He comments on the use by Morris of the term Socialism and Communism:

> "William Morris is the first, it appears to us, to use the terms Socialist and Communist to designate, on one hand, the two stages of the new society and on the other, two political doctrines: the one regarding the first stage as an end in itself, the other seeing it only as a step towards a higher stage. The use Marx and Engels had made of these terms at the time of the *Communist Manifesto* was placed in a different context, and Engels had needed to explain in his Preface of 1890 why the adjective chosen had been 'communist' rather than 'socialist': 'In 1847, socialism was a bourgeois movement, whereas communism was working class.' The two usages, that of Marx and Engels and the new one of Morris, have persisted side by side into our own time, causing sometimes deplorable confusions. For Morris, the distinction between socialism and communism was clear: he drew it in his mind not in relation to the past or the present but in relation to the future and that is why he preferred for himself the title of Communist."

What is often forgotten is that the society described in *News from Nowhere* is not that of the morning after the revolution but this second stage, and that a period of several generations, perhaps approaching a couple of centuries, has been taken to reach it. This has led to serious misunderstandings, some of them perhaps wilful. In particular it has often been claimed (or condemned) as an Anarchist utopia, and Morris himself as an Anarchist, in spite of his repeated and indignant denials. Revolution had never meant for him the abolition or disappearance of the State. He saw it as opening a long period of transition during which it would become increasingly superfluous. It has often been noted that *News from Nowhere* describes the process of revolution, less often that it also describes, though indeed in a more diffused way, the withering away of the State.

Two Cheers for Socialism

All the same, it was the second stage which really interested him. What he cared about was the quality of life, and institutions, even the best of them, irritated and bored him. He was never prepared to give more than two cheers for Socialism and tended to regard the first stage as an unavoidable and transitory evil:

> "the paraphernalia of official authority, which is, after all, a burden, even when it is exercised by the delegation of the whole people and in accordance with their wishes",[7]

he writes. And:

> "I think it is quite probable that in the early days of Socialism the reflex of the terror of starvation, which so oppresses us now, would drive us into excesses of utilitarianism. Indeed there is a school of Socialists now extant (Morris is thinking of the Fabians) who worship utilitarianism with a fervour of fatuity which is perhaps a natural consequence of their assumption of practicality . . . objectors would have to give up the lesser for the greater."[8]

In all his attempts at looking into the future the first stage is hurried over and it is on the second stage, the classless society, on which he prefers to dwell.

This, Dr Meier points out, has laid him open to an unjustified charge of excessive optimism:

> "It is clear that the reproach of naive optimism which has been often levelled at Morris is unjustified and originated in ignorance of or failure to grasp the theory of the two stages. The vision of a happy society which *News from Nowhere* reveals is not placed in the immediate future but in a quite distant epoch. The optimism which Morris has about the conditions in this distant epoch is not naive but reasonable and nothing exists which entitles us to say that it is not legitimate. But precisely because it leads on to this higher stage, and above all because it has abolished all traces of capitalist exploitation, it would be excessive to say that the view he takes of this first stage is a pessimistic one. Morris explains this very well:
>
> 'We are prepared to face whatever drawbacks may accompany this new development with equanimity, being convinced that it will at any rate be a great gain to have got rid of a system which has at last become nearly all drawbacks.'"

It is to be hoped that it will not be long before this splendid book is made more generally available in this country through an English translation.

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[7] *True and False Society.*

[8] *Socialism and Anarchism.*

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Parents and Children

Honor Arundel

FAMILY relationships have always been an important part of the subject matter of literature, containing as they do the possibilities of every kind of conflict—between temperaments, generations and ideologies—quarrels over property inheritance, rivalry for love or power. As far back as the book of Genesis Cain kills his brother Abel out of jealousy; Jacob, his mother's favourite does Essau, his father's favourite out of his birthright and his father's blessing; the pampered darling Joseph is thrown into a pit by his jealous brothers. The lurid family life portrayed in Greek classical tragedy is well known. Even in modern times a recent survey of crime statistics in the *Sunday Observer* pointed out that the majority of crimes take place within the family circle and even drew the conclusion that it was perhaps more dangerous to spend evenings cosily at home than to wander in lonely places late at night.

Yet whatever the evidence to the contrary a firm belief persists that the family unit is a sacred set-up, that there is such a thing as natural love between its various members, that domestic felicity is the basis of personal happiness. "This will undermine family life" has long been the battle cry of people trying to discredit any revolutionary movement in the arts, sciences or in politics.

Different Societies Different Rules

Different forms of society have distorted this idea. Extreme poverty forced parents to abandon children at birth or sell them at puberty; the importance of private property made lapses from wifely fidelity a crime and bastardy social rejection; greed for increased wealth gave parents an excuse for arranging their children's marriages on the basis of linked lands and fortunes rather than on the possibilities of mutual affection; male economic and political superiority led to domestic tyranny over wives and children as well as over working people and servants.

The idealised family, like the one described by Burns in *The Cotter's Saturday Night:*

> "At length his lonely cot appears in view,
> Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
> Th'expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
> To meet their dad, wi' flicherin noise and glee.
> His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
> His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
> The lisping infant, prattling on his knee"

is seldom to be found either in real life or in literature for even when the obvious distorting social factors have been eliminated children continue to rebel against their parents and quarrel among themselves.

Just as social and moral laws have changed as society changed so have the rules regulating ideal family behaviour.

In *King Lear*, for instance, Shakespeare contrasts a typical feudal attitude with the new ruthless individualism. The natural law of the feudal family implied natural duties and natural love. It is a parent's duty to look after helpless children and a child's duty to look after helpless parents. In the beginning fairy-tale situation, the king demands of his three daughters which loves him most. Goneril makes extravagant protestations:

> "Sir I love you more than words can wield the matter,
> Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty",

and Regan:

> "Myself an enemy to all other joys
> Which the most precious square of sense possess;
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear Highness' love."

But Cordelia only replies:

> "You have begot me, bred, loved me, I
> Return those duties as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you and most honour you.

She is obeying the natural law. And when Goneril and Regan fail to put their words into practice it is their un-naturalness that Lear protests at.

> "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
> More hideous when thou showst thee in a child
> Than the Sea-monster"

and again,

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child".

In spite of all the crimes and aberrations in Shakespeare's plays runs a firm belief in the sacred order of obedience and respect for parents. Even that marble-hearted fiend Lady Macbeth draws back

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from the murder of Duncan because he resembled her father as he slept. Parents were the top of the feudal family hierarchy but they had duties as well as rights and the various characters who banish or disinherit their children equally offend against the natural law.

Good Men, Innocent Children

The ideology of individualism and human rights which eventually found political expression in the French Revolution very slowly began to alter the parent-child relationship. As early as 1690, John Locke had written in his Thoughts on Education: "Children should be treated as rational creatures, they should be allowed their liberties and freedom suitable to their ages." But he still believed in the occasional use of the cudgel and complete submission to parental authority.

One of the fundamental ideas connected with the French Revolution was the essential goodness of man.

"The Golden Age we'll then revive;
Each man will be a brother;
In harmony we all shall live,
And share the earth together;
In Virtue train'd, enlighten'd Youth
Will love each fellow-creature;
And future years shall prove the truth
That Man is good by nature."

wrote Burns. If man's natural goodness was distorted by unnatural environment then it was only necessary to change the environment to give man a chance to flourish. And in the meantime, children, being uncorrupted by adult experience, were innocent. Rousseau's Emil was an experiment to retain that innocence.

The idea of children's innocence was not of course new but it took on a new emphasis.

"Happy those early days when I
Shin'd in my Angel-infancy"

Henry Vaughan had written, and

"Before I taught my tongue to wound
My conscience with a sinfull sound
Or had the black art to dispense
A severall sinne to ever sense
And felt thru all this fleshy dress
Bright shootes of everlastingnesse."

And Wordsworth whose whole poetic philosophy was bound up with the ideas of the French Revolution followed in his *Imitations of Immortality* with

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy;
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy."

Although the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were not translated into political fact they left their mark on the intellectual climate. And enlightened ideas about the rights of children were explored with the rise of the domestic family novel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was inevitable when you consider how many of the novelists were women whose lives were largely circumscribed by the family circle, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell.

Nineteenth Century Novelists

Jane Austen, in taking a long cool look at family relationships, takes the middle rational way—of love tempered with commonsense, of respect and obedience—up to a point. Her view is that not all parents are sensible and not all children angels, but given a certain amount of good will on both sides that nothing too dreadful should occur.

Emma Woodhouse's father is a foolish man, a self-induced invalid, obsessed with his own and other people's health. Given a different author one could easily imagine a situation where Emma devoted her life to her old father and became a neurotic old maid. Instead, and while giving her father all the affection and respect she considers his due, she cheerfully marries Mr. Knightly.

Mr. Woodhouse is not the only silly parent. Mrs. Bennett is vulgar and grasping, her only interests gossiping and getting her daughters married to the richest possible men. Lady Bertram is indolent to the point of idiocy; Sir Thomas, pompous and without humour; Sir Walter Elliott (whose only reading matter was the baronetcy) is downright cruel. And some of the children, though seldom the charming heroes and heroines, are foolish too. But while the old attitude of respect for parents simply because they are parents is still apparent, the idea of complete obedience is being whittled away by the new ideas of personal responsibility and individual rights. Even the gentle timid Fanny of Mansfield Park feels she has the right to refuse marriage with an eligible man because she does not love him.

And the parents themselves have lost belief in absolute dictatorial methods. Mr. and Mrs. Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, while insisting that their daughter Catherine must wait for her young man's father's consent to their marriage, are kind enough not to forbid a clandestine correspondence. "And whenever Catherine received a letter as at that time happened pretty often, they always looked another way." A splendid example of parental tact.

George Eliot, although writing more than fifty years later, is, like Jane Austen, concerned with social life in small country towns and with family relationships based on common sense and natural affections.

The Tullivers in *The Mill on the Floss*, although

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they force poor Tom to "acquire an education" against his will and keep it from Maggie who desires it so desperately, could never be called despotic parents. They are unimaginative and conventional but are governed entirely by goodwill, earnestly anxious to "do the best" for their children. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's rebellion is not directed against her well-meaning father but against the limitations of Middlemarch society in general.

If the eighteenth century is characterised as the age of enlightenment and common sense, the nineteenth is the age of exploitation masked by hypocrisy. We see the rise of the so-called respectable family who talked about religion and thought about money; who saw the terrible poverty and misery in the dark satanic mills and insisted that God had ordained the rich man to wallow in his castle while the poor man starved at his gate; who permitted working-class women and children to labour in factory and mine while pretending that upper-class women were too good and too pure to sully their hands with toil or their minds with thought. Father exploited his work people all day and came home to bully his wife and children all night.

Literature was still largely written by middle-class writers but the great nineteenth century novelists not only exposed the physical horrors of life in workhouse, orphanage and factory, but also the moral horrors of middle-class family life.

Against Cruelty, Physical and Psychological

Dickens stands out for his social indignation and deep sympathy for all poor, abandoned and exploited children, but it is not only physical cruelty that excites his anger, it is psychological cruelty. The misery of Oliver Twist under his brutal masters is equalled by the different kind of misery endured by David Copperfield. David is not hungry but the scene where the grisly Mr. Murdstone terrorises him over his lessons while his ineffectual mother sits wringing her hands, stays in the memory as an equal horror. The whipping itself is bad enough, but it is the slowly mounting fear of the whipping which is worse. And this is a new element in parent-children relationships, quite different from the old-fashioned straightforward flogging, disinheriting or banishment.

We meet it again in Samuel Butler's masterly exposure of the middle-class family in *The Way of All Flesh*. Little Ernest is asked to sing a hymn to the family friend—"Come, come, Come to the sunset tree" and cannot pronounce the letter "c", mispronouncing it "Tum, tum, tum".

After several admonitions his odious father, Theobald, says, "Now Ernest, I will give you one more chance, and if you don't say 'come' I shall know that you are self-willed and naughty".

> "He looked very angry and a shade came over Ernest's face, like that which comes upon the face of a puppy when it is being scolded without understanding why. The child saw well what was coming now, was frightened, and, of course, said 'tum' once more.
>
> " 'Very well, Ernest', said his father, catching him angrily by the shoulder. 'I have done my best to save you, but if you will have it so, you will,' and he lugged the little wretch, crying by anticipation, out of the room. A few minutes more and we could hear screams coming from the dining room and knew that poor Ernest was being beaten.
>
> " 'I have sent him up to bed', said Theobald, as he returned to the drawing room, 'and now, Christina, I think we will have the servants in to prayers,' and he rang the bell for them, red-handed as he was."

Hand in hand with psychological cruelty is its opposite, indulgence. If children are not terrorised and beaten, they are indulged to their own and every one else's misery.

Parental Indulgence

We caught a glimpse of this in Jane Austen—the spoilt children at Barton in *Sense and Sensibility* for instance—but it is dealt with in more detail by Anne Bronte in *Agnes Grey*, where the governess is faced again and again with the monstrous creations of parental *laissez faire*.

Master Tom who catches birds in traps: "Sometimes I give them to the cat; sometimes I cut them in pieces with my penknife; but the next I mean to roast alive."

Little Fanny who "was alarmingly fond of exercising her two favourite weapons of offence and defence; that of spitting in the faces of those who incurred her displeasure and bellowing like a bull when her unreasonable desires were not gratified". Mary Ann, who would not be dressed or washed in the morning. All described by their parents as "clever children—apt to learn—generous and noble-hearted—remarkably gentle and requiring encouragement".

But my favourite scene of parental indulgence and juvenile repulsiveness occurs in Susan Ferrier's novel *The Inheritance* in which Mrs. Fairbairn, "one of those ladies who, from the time she became a mother, ceased to be anything else" is receiving guests.

> "In the middle of the room all the chairs were collected to form a coach and horse for the Masters and Misses Fairbairn. One unruly-looking urchin sat in front, cracking a long whip with all his might; another acted as guard behind, and blew a shrill trumpet with all his strength; while a third, in a night-cap and flannel lappet paraded up and down, in solitary majesty, beating a drum.
>
> "On a sofa sat Mrs. Fairbairn, a soft, fair, genteel-

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> looking woman, with a crying child of about three years old at her side, tearing paper into shreds, seemingly for the delight of littering the carpet which was already strewed with headless dolls, tailless horses, wheelless carts etc. As she rose to receive her visitors it began to scream."

Cruelty and indulgence. Children were private property, little devils to be beaten or little angels to be cossetted and spoiled.

Rebellion in the Family

But there is a third attitude now beginning to be apparent in literature, the attitude of rebellion and this is not just the rebellion of daughter or son against arranged marriages, but an ideological rebellion, particularly on the part of young women. For the nineteenth century was also the age of female revolt, of women like Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Fry, Elizabeth Garret—middle-class women who like Jane Eyre were bored by "making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags." There is a spirit of unrest, a wind of change blowing through the family circle whether it is expressed in the vague yearnings of Dorothea in *Middlemarch* to find a beautifully, exciting, dedicated life, or the actual physical escape of Elizabeth Barratt from the claustrophobic prison of Wimpole Street.

Sir Edmond Gosse deals truthfully and affectionately with his own escape from his narrow and bigoted (though charming) Plymouth Brethren father in his autobiography *Father and Son*. In an almost identical title *Fathers and Sons*, Turgeniev gives an even more illuminating picture since he deals not only with the sons' revolt but with the fathers' reactions.

Arkady and his stern young friend Bazarov return to Arkady's family home in the country in a mood of patronising affection for the "old folk". They try to "educate" the old man, to stop him reading Pushkin. "You ought to explain to him that no good can come of that, for he is no longer a boy and ought to have shaken himself free of such fiddlesticks," says Bazarov kindly. And they give him a book of German philosophy instead.

Arkady attempts to defend his father.

> "But think of his upbringing", expostulated Arkady, "Think of the period in which he has lived his life."
>
> "His upbringing?" retorted Bazarov. "Why, a man ought to bring himself up, even as I had to do. And with regard to his period, why should I, or any other man, be dependent upon periods? Rather, we ought to make periods dependent upon us."

And later occurs the dialogue when they hear the cello being played:

> "Who is the musician?" asked Bazarov in astonishment.
>
> "My father."
>
> "What? Your father plays the cello?"
>
> "He does."
>
> "At his age?"
>
> "Yes, he is only forty-four."
>
> Bazaravo burst out laughing.
>
> "Why do you laugh?" asked Arkady.
>
> "Pardon me, but the idea that your father, a man of forty-four, a paterfamilias and a notable in the country—should play the cello!"

The forty-four-year-old cello-playing, Pushkin-reading father—how easy it would be to translate into modern terms—says sadly to his brother:

> "I find that you and I are men on the shelf, that our songs have been sung . . . though I had hoped to draw nearer to Arkady, I am being left in the rear, and he is for ever marching ahead. No longer do he and I understand one another."

He remembers a quarrel with his own mother "when I told her that for her to understand me was impossible seeing that she and I came of different generations. What else could I do? The pill must have been a bitter one but it was necessary that she should swallow it. And now our turn is come; now is it for us to be told by our heirs that we come of a different generation from theirs and must swallow the pill."

Arkady and his father are the ancestors of the characters in modern novels in which communication between the generations is impossible.

But in general the revolt of the children is loaded in their favour whether it is Jolyon in the *Forsyte Saga* who despises the family business and wants to become an artist; H. G. Well's Ann Veronica with her brave little flag of defiance against conventional morality, or George in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*.

Contemporary Families

Today parents are no longer right and know best. On the contrary. They are millstones round children's necks. Working class boys want room at the top, middle class boys or girls want to escape from plushy security, country girls want to escape to the city. A son or daughter who did not question (and condemn) their parents' way of life is almost unthinkable in modern fiction.

As well as social, political and economic influences on the family today there has been the influence of psychology, which like all important subjects has been dangerous when imperfectly understood. It has reduced a lot of parents to gibbering maniacs. Too much love, not enough, too much repression, too much permission, over-protection, under-protection

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—put a foot wrong and your son or daughter will go in for shoplifting, drugs and bashing old ladies on the head. Lurking behind the modern anti-heroes and anti-heroines are the sinister parent figures whose fault it all is. They are no longer dictators, either benevolent or cruel, but pitiful victims of their own characters and circumstances.

But of course understanding psychology does not mean gay talk about complexes and repressions. "He has a mother fixation", "she has an inferiority complex", or "they are repressed", excusing all anti-social behaviour because he or she "can't help it". It is as necessary for a writer as the study of anatomy is for a painter. No doubt it helped D. H. Lawrence in *Sons and Lovers* to explain so sensitively and subtly how a too-close mother relationship makes it impossible for a son to achieve a mature love with a woman of his own age. (At the same time it is worth remembering that Lawrence gives some of the first warm, cheerful description of working class family life, neither idealised nor suffering from the typical middle class fallacy that poverty equals misery. The miner's kitchen, the bath in front of the fire, father mending something, mother doing the ironing, the small treats of games in the winter lamplight, blackberry gathering and visits to the fair—all are tenderly and precisely described).

Among the innumerable novels about the sensitive, defiant children in ideological revolt against their parents, the *Martha Quest* novels by Doris Lessing stand out for their honesty and disturbing qualities. Martha, brought up on a small unsuccessful farm in a British colony in Africa, with a neurotic sentimental mother and a father still experiencing in imagination his military life during the First World War, disapproves wholeheartedly of everything her parents stand for, their political and sexual morals, their whole way of life. Defiantly reading Havelock Ellis she listens contemptuously to her mother gossiping about servants, children and cooking, and dreams of a brotherhood of "warm generous people exchanging generous emotions", of a dream city "where white and black and brown lived as equals and there was no hatred or violence". Obviously she must and does become a communist and ideally her personal and political rebellion should beautifully integrate.

But Doris Lessing is too good a novelist to choose such an easy outcome. Martha is never completely free from her upbringing. Because she despises marriage—in principle—she considers it unimportant and thus makes two thoroughly disastrous marriages. Because she despises conventional religion she tends to make communism into a religion and thus suffers disillusion. She needs to identify herself with the African liberation movement but (the book is set in the 1940s) the colour of her skin and the social conventions make it impossible. She is never free either from a grudging affection for her parents or a downright dislike. She is never free period.

At the same time Martha is always conscious of the banality of her situation, that she is fighting a battle that was won in principle years and years ago, and the knowledge of this banality saps her energy, for what is the use of spending your life proving something as obvious as the roundness of the world?

This knowledge of banality also affects Margaret Drabble in her *A Summer Birdcage* who purposely deals with her heroines' desire to leave home in a dialogue of acid cliches.

> MAMA: I don't see what all the hurry is about. No sooner do I get rid of one daughter than the other starts leaving home. You just use home as if it were a hotel, you two, you don't seem to remember I'm your mother and have always been on your side whenever your—and then all you want to do is to get away to your horrible dirty friends and horrible poky little flats.
>
> ME: Oh, Mum, you know Loulou's flat isn't a bit horrible, it's a very smart little place in South Ken, all pastel painted and hand-woven curtains. . . .
>
> MAMA: All I am is a servant, that's all I am, just a household drudge, and when I think how I respected my mother and carried things for her, and the years I've sat in for you two, all those nights when your father was away. . . .
>
> ME: Don't say that, don't say that, of course I'll stay, it doesn't matter to me at all—

Children's Literature

But I have left out an important part of literature, that which is specially designed for children themselves. Since John Newberry designed his 6d. books for "a present to every little boy who would become a great Man and to every little girl who would become a fine woman and ride in a Governor's gilt coach" there has been a gradually increasing number of books specifically written for children until between January 1961 and January 1963, that indefatigable reader and critic of children's books, Margery Fisher, mentions, with approbation, 500 new titles and 200 new authors. (Several thousand more were probably not considered worth mentioning.)

Since most children live at home in company with their parents one might imagine that many books would be set in the family circle. For as well as tales of fantasy and imagination, adventure, history, fairy tales with their modern counterparts of spacemen, daleks and spies, children get particular pleasure from reading about people like themselves. But this curiously is not so.

In boarding school stories, which have a quite phenomenal vogue when you consider what a minute proportion of the population has ever or is ever likely to attend one, there are naturally no

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parents, but even in a vast number of domestic family stories parents are still conspicuous by their absence.

They are ill, away, dead or on holiday, only re-appearing for a rapturous re-union in the last chapter. They are dim benevolent figures like "the best of all Natives" in Arthur Ransome's books, cosy infallible characters as in Enid Blyton's innumerable works, or frankly idealised like "Dearest" in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* or Marmee in *Little Women:*

> " 'Glad to find you so merry, my girls,' said a cheery voice at the door and actors and audience turned to welcome a stout, motherly lady, with a 'Can I help you' look about her which was truly delightful. She wasn't a particularly handsome person, but mothers are always lovely to their children and the girls thought the gray cloak and unfashionable bonnet covered the most splendid woman in the world."

Obviously to small children parents are dim and benevolent figures but since one of the most important and necessary aspects of growing up is to identify both oneself and ones parents as separate personalities it seems unfortunate that this relationship is so seldom explored.

However in recent years a new realism has begun to permeate junior books, especially for the over-elevens, in which parent-child relationships are explored in depth. The old deus ex machina parents who could answer all questions, solve all problems and were always right, are gradually becoming discredited in favour of more fallible, human characters.

In general the glimpses of family life we get in contemporary novels are far from pretty. The exploitation may be more often psychological than physical and it may be that children are as often the exploiters as the victims, but it is clear that the normal stresses and strains of parents and children living together are exacerbated by our disintegrating society. Bad housing, the lack of privacy, the lust for gadgets, the educational rat race, the lack of community activities and feelings, the threat of war, the lack of general social responsibility are all reflected in novels of claustrophobic cosiness or hatred, absorption in sex for its own sake, destructive and anarchic rebellion, ruthless social climbing. The old patterns of love and obedience have broken into fragments.

The abolition of private property and exploitation by socialist societies must in turn transform the family. For a family could be a microcosm of communism, "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs". No doubt this is actually happening but the novels so far produced in socialist countries—or anyhow the ones that have come my way—have not yet mirrored this change or acted as a changing agent. In fact, generally speaking, personal and family relationships have been dealt with in only a superficial manner. There has been nothing to equal Tolstoy's marvellous and perceptive descriptions in *Anna Karenina*, where each family typifies a social trend as well as an individual one, and each, the Scherbatsky's, the Oblonsky's, the Karenin's and the Levin's are subjected to the particular pressures of contemporary ideology, economics and social and moral codes.

"All happy families are alike but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion," writes Tolstoy, in the opening paragraph. But I do not agree. I think the ingredients for happiness can be equally varied and we shall only begin to discover them when pre-history ends and civilisation begins.

Discussion Contribution on:

Marxism and the Family

Bessie Leigh

Personal relationships are a fact of life. Whether they are loose or close knit, and the framework within which they exist, i.e., marriage and family, is dependent upon the type of society in which they occur.

The simple communistic household of barbarism corresponded to that era of primitive production, not by chance, but because this is how human relationships are governed. Selective and more permanent marriage developed with the growth of property. The wide feudal family corresponded to the development of the productive forces during feudalism, and today's monogamic marriage conforms to the private ownership of the means of production, the sharply divided classes in monopoly capitalism, and the further growth of property. The

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simple communistic family could no more become the prevailing pattern of this era, than could monogamy in the age of barbarism.

A Complex Institution

The modern family is a complex institution because it is an integral part of a complex modern society. It is an organisational framework for people who are themselves the complex products of this society. There exists today a range of human desires and emotions (loyalties, jealousies, hatreds etc.) which were non-existent in the historic past, and to look back into the family of a previous era, and to draw from it the conclusion that "this is how it was, and the children do not seem to have suffered" is neither a scientific analysis nor a guide to the future. The simple solution to problems of the past do not apply to the complex present.

This is not to adopt a fatalistic attitude towards marriage and the family under capitalism, but to see it as developed under the formative pressures of this society, and subject to change throughout history. It follows that marriage and the family will be something different under Socialism, and, under Communism, something different again.

Family does not cut across class nor class across family. The family is firmly embedded in its class, and has the same needs, aims and functions, which makes the slogan "abolish the family" totally irrelevant in the present situation.

Just as the isolated individual worker learns his or her role as the gravedigger of capitalism, the isolated, individual family under capitalism learns the same lesson—how to fight, how to combine to defend and advance its interests, and it is around the fight in defence of the home and family that much of the present strength and unity of the working class has been forged. This is not because marriage and the family seems to them to be ideal and without blemish, but because it once appeared to offer fulfilment of all their hopes and ambitions, and because it is something that they have created out of themselves, because they have worked, schemed, sacrificed over the years to preserve and advance it, and because they have done so in spite of all the difficulties and disappointments.

The Working Class Family

The working class family has fought its way from the appalling poverty and deprivation of the industrial revolution, when family life scarcely existed, to establish its right to a modern home, personal property, an education for its children, and a future for all its members. This is the measure of its success in the class struggle, and a tribute to its class understanding, organisation, tenacity and courage.

While there can be no denying that the ruling class sets false standards, and urges working people to adopt them, the life style of the ruling class, based on its stolen wealth and power, has nothing in common with the fruits of the victories of the working class in its battle against homelessness, poverty, unemployment and war. Today all these gains are under attack from the Tories.

Bringing up a family under capitalism is a process which not only defeats—it also educates, and today's working class movement has reached new heights of struggle and is achieving clarity on a number of fundamental questions. Millions of women are part of this militant development, stimulated in part by the new economic conditions in the world, but also by the developments in the Socialist countries, where the advancement of women is not only a matter for discussion, but also for Government action.

No serious student of politics would suggest, however, that working class women in Britain have been won for the idea of a fundamental change in society, for Socialism. Their main concern is defence of the home and family *as of now*. It is politically naive to expect them to endorse such slogans as "abolish the family" or "don't defend the family", however real the need for change. And herein lies the reason for the gulf that separates those who argue for such slogans and the mass of the working people. These slogans are a rejection of something, however bedevilled with problems, which embodies the dearest hopes, desires and ambitions of millions of people.

Start where the People are

The essence of Marxist theory is that when tested in real life it is found to be either true or false. Marxists need to live in the present, to start from where the people are, and not attempt to impose conditions which we think should characterise the future. This is not to say that we are not concerned with shaping events. Far from it, but that we need to examine the present closely as a guide to the future.

The strength of the Women's Liberation Movement, lies in the fact that, born out of the world flow towards women's emancipation, it has highlighted woman's double exploitation. The weakness of this movement has been its tendency to a negative approach and its pre-occupation with aspects of the problem which are not the main concern of the mass of working women now moving into action. The hopefulness of the situation lies in the growing coming-together of these two schools of thought and action. All who are serious about this matter have to consider how this process can be developed and strengthened.

It is not the purpose of this article to deal with the traumatic effects of a decaying capitalism on the family and its members. This has been done more

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than adequately elsewhere. But it is pertinent to ask: Why is it that human love, a relationship so full of hope, happiness and promise, should so often end in bitter disillusion, despair and hatred? Why is it that the family, an institution which has within it all the elements of human love, respect for partnership and selfless devotion to the advancement of the next generation, be bedevilled with such problems and difficulties that it often deteriorates to the point of destroying the lives and personalities of its members?

Maybe here we have the key, not only to the problems of the family under Capitalism, but to the possibilities that exist for it under Socialism, because, fortunately, such theories as we evolve can now be tested against life itself in the Socialist countries.

The Family in Socialist Society

The family is the smallest unit in society. It is the only community which is constant, in which a frequent change of persons is neither natural nor necessary. It can make more continuous efforts on behalf of the individual than any other institution. It has a particularly close relationship with the rising generation, and its influence on the individual is far-reaching. Because of this, its stability, its welfare and its moral outlook are critical for the quality of life under Socialism. If there is something rotten in the family, there will be something rotten in the society of which it is a unit.

So far in 1973, people in the Socialist countries show no demand for ending the family, nor for replacing it with some wider, communal form of living. They demand, above all, good individual family homes, and the emphasis is on building the family into a community of equal partners, all with rights and responsibilities within the family, and outside it, in the Socialist State.

The first pre-requisite for success in this endeavour is the equality of men and women, and one of the first acts of all Socialist Governments is to establish this in law and work for it in practice. The second is that the best interests of the family must harmonise with the best interests of the State. The conflict of interests between the family and the State, so sharp, so brutal and so destructive under Capitalism, has to be eliminated during the building of Socialism.

There remains the most complex of all problems. How to reduce the areas of potential personal conflict within the family? For example, bad housing, money problems, religious considerations, ideological backwardness of one or both partners, sexual irresponsibility, or behaviour showing contempt for women, lack of education or opportunity for any members of the group, the generation gap, pre-occupation with the family's own advancement and isolation from questions of public interest and concern, etc. etc. It can be seen that the ramifications of this problem penetrate deep into the workings of the state, and the solutions are bound up with its socialist future.

The broad pattern of advance is the same in all Socialist countries. Millions of new and better homes, the advancement of women to equality, higher wages, cheaper food, and rent, canteens, laundries, nurseries and creches, and widening education and opportunity for all. Khazakstan farmers have cars, refrigerators and washing machines, and the Hungarian Government urges people to modernise and improve their homes.

The Socialist States do not take over the children from their parents. They recognise that rearing children is an important civic task of the parents, but at the same time carry out their own share of responsibility for bringing up the new generation. Because it is Socialism and not Communism, housework is not yet a public service; many household chores remain, and within the home, ideological backwardness slows down the development of the Socialist family. But nothing will stop this process, however halting it may seem at times.

The new generation of women will never accept the insults, the indignities and the frustrations their mothers suffered. The new generation of men, whose life, education and training have prepared them for a responsible attitude towards marriage and the family, will not always repeat the mistakes of their fathers. The Socialist States will continue their work of breaking down the isolation of the family, reducing its problems, and integrating it into a community having the cultural and moral outlook, the same economic aims, the same objective of the betterment of the lives of all its members, as it has itself. What will be the shape of things to come rests with those who will shape them.

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